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# The Practice

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THE PRACTICE OF ZEN

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# Contents

FOREWORD	7
<b>I. THE NATURE OF ZEN</b>	
ZEN STYLE AND ZEN ART	12
THE CORE OF ZEN: STUDIES IN THE THREE MAIN ASPECTS OF MIND	41
FOUR VITAL POINTS IN ZEN BUDDHISM	49
<b>II. THE PRACTICE OF ZEN</b>	
A GENERAL REVIEW OF ZEN PRACTICE	62
DISCOURSES OF FOUR ZEN MASTERS	72
1. <i>Discourses of Master Hsu Yun</i>	72
2. <i>Discourses of Master Tsung Kao</i>	85
3. <i>Discourses of Master Po Shan</i>	94
4. <i>Discourse of Master Han Shan</i>	111
SHORT AUTOBIOGRAPHIES OF FIVE ZEN MASTERS	118
1. <i>Epitome of Zen Master Han Shan's Auto-         biography</i>	118



## 6 Contents

2. <i>Zen Master Wu Wen's Story</i>	142
3. <i>Zen Master Hsueh Yen's Story</i>	144
4. <i>Zen Master Meng Shan's Story</i>	148
5. <i>Zen Master Kao Feng's Story</i>	153

## III. THE FOUR PROBLEMS OF ZEN BUDDHISM

IS ZEN COMPLETELY UNINTELLIGIBLE?	157
WHAT IS ZEN "ENLIGHTENMENT"?	162
✓ ZEN AND MAHAYANA BUDDHISM	167
THE "FOUR DISTINCTIONS" OF LIN CHI	175

## IV. BUDDHA AND MEDITATION

THE THREE ASPECTS OF BUDDHAHOOD IN RELATION TO THE SIX PATTERNS OF HUMAN THINKING	185
A SURVEY OF THE PRACTICE OF BUD- DHIST MEDITATION	201
1. <i>The Four Basic Characteristics of Sam-         adhi</i>	202
2. <i>The Seven Different Types of Meditation         Practice</i>	204
3. <i>The Three Successive Stages of Medita-         tion</i>	215
NOTES	220
BIBLIOGRAPHY	236
APPENDIX	239
<i>Romanized Chinese Characters for the Text</i>	239
<i>Romanized Chinese Characters for the Notes</i>	243
INDEX	247



## Foreword

People in the West who take up the study of Zen Buddhism enthusiastically often discover, after the initial fascination has worn off, that the consecutive steps required for its serious pursuit turn out to be disappointing and fruitless. Wonderful indeed is the experience of Enlightenment; but the crucial question is, how can one get *into* it? The problem of catching this tantalizing "Zen witch" remains unsolved for most of the Zen enthusiasts in the West.

This is because Zen studies in the West are still in their beginnings, and its students are still lingering in that shadowy region between "being interested in" and "understanding" Zen. Most of them have not yet come to a point of maturity in their studies at which they can actually practice Zen, realize it, and make it their own innermost possession.

Since Zen is not, in its essence and on its higher levels, a philosophy, but a direct experience that one

must enter into with his whole being, the primary aim should be at the attainment and realization of the Zen experience. To realize this supreme experience, known as the "Wu insight" or "Enlightenment," one needs either to rely completely on an accomplished Zen Master, or to struggle on alone through study and actual practice.

In the hope of furthering an understanding of Zen and making things easier for those who have been searching for practical instruction, I selected, translated, and presented herein a number of short autobiographies and discourses of the great Zen Masters, from both ancient and modern sources, which, although very popular in the East, are generally unknown in the West. From the contents of these documents one may obtain a picture of the lives and works of the Zen Masters, thus getting a clearer idea of how Zen work is actually done. For none is better qualified than these accomplished Masters to deal with the subject of practical Zen. To follow their example and instruction is, therefore, the best and safest way to practice it. It is for this reason that the discourses of the four celebrated Chinese Zen Masters, Hsu Yun, Tsung Kao, Po Shan, and Han Shan, are introduced.

In addition to my own suggestions and comments on Zen practice, which may be found in the beginning of the second chapter, a survey of the essential aspects of Zen Buddhism is also given at the outset of this book. It is hoped that, after reading the first chapter, the reader may gain a further insight into Zen Buddhism, and thus be able to pursue his studies with greater ease than before. The newcomer to Buddhism, however, may meet with some difficulties. Although as a whole this book is of an introductory nature, it is perhaps more specific on certain problems and in certain fields of Zen study than



some other books of its kind available at present in the English language.

Chapter III, "The Four Problems of Zen Buddhism," was originally an essay on "The Nature of Ch'an Buddhism" appearing in the January, 1957, issue of *Philosophy East and West*, published by the University of Hawaii. With some minor changes, it has now been incorporated into this book. I believe that the four problems discussed therein are of great importance for Zen studies.

Chapter IV, "Buddha and Meditation," was originally in the form of a lecture, given in a seminar at Columbia University in 1954, at the invitation of Dr. Jean Mahler. It gives some basic teachings of Buddhism and some essential principles underlying Buddhist meditation practice which perhaps have not yet been fully introduced to the West.

As many Zen phrases and expressions are extremely difficult if not impossible to translate, even being considered by some scholars as utterly untranslatable, I have had to resort, in a few instances, to free translation. Some of the Japanese terms such as "koan" for *Kung-en*, "Satori" for *Wu*, "Zen" for *Ch'an* etc., have now become established and are widely used in the West, and they are also employed in this book, concurrently with the original Chinese terms. The romanization of the Chinese characters used is based upon the Wade-Giles system. All the diacritical marks in romanized Chinese and Sanskrit words used in the text have been left out, since they would only be confusing to the general reader and are unnecessary for Chinese and Sanskrit scholars, who will at once recognize the original Chinese characters and Devanagiri script.

I wish to express my deep gratitude to Mr. George Currier, Miss Gwendolyn Winsor, Mrs. Dorothy Do-

nath, and to my wife, Hsiang Hsiang, all of whom have rendered great assistance in helping me with my English, in preparing, editing, and typing the manuscript, and in making valuable suggestions and comments on the work. I also wish to thank my old friend, Mr. P. J. Gruber, for his constant assistance and encouragement.

As a refugee from China, I wish also to thank all of my American friends, and both the Bollingen Foundation and the Oriental Study Foundation, for their generous assistance in providing me with the opportunity to continue my work and study in the field of Buddhism here in the United States. To them all I am grateful beyond measure.

NEW YORK CITY  
MARCH, 1959



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The  
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What is Zen? "Zen" is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese word "Ch'an," and "Ch'an" is the abbreviation of the original phrase "Ch'an-Na"—a corruption of the pronunciation of the Sanskrit word *Dhyana* or the Pali, *Jhana*. In other words, "Zen" is a mispronunciation of another mispronunciation! This, however, is less important than the fact that Zen represents a teaching which may well be considered as the pinnacle of all Buddhist thought, a teaching that is most direct, profound, and practical—capable of bringing one to thorough liberation and perfect Enlightenment. But it is very difficult to give a clear account of it. Zen is, as one of the Chinese expressions puts it, something "round and rolling, slippery and slick"—something ungraspable and indescribable, which cannot be explained or interpreted. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile trying to overcome this difficulty in order to present a clearer picture of Zen.

*Zen Style and Zen Art*

Zen is a school of Mahayana Buddhism, originated and developed in China. Its philosophy and practice are not essentially different from those of other Mahayana schools. Zen does not possess any unique or exclusive teachings that are not included in over-all Mahayana Buddhism. The difference is solely in the unconventional style and in the unusual forms of expression adopted by the Zen Buddhists. This "Zen style" or "tradition," formed in the later period of Zen history, is so outstanding and unusual that it has made Zen a remarkable and extraordinary form of Buddhist teaching unparalleled in any other field of philosophy or religion.

What, then, is this "Zen style"? Put briefly, Zen style consists of the puzzling language, baffling attitudes, and surprising methods that Zen Buddhists employ in their teachings and practice.

For example, a monk asked, "What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from the West?" (That is to say, "What is the Truth?") The Master answered, "The cypress tree in the courtyard." The same question, put before another Master, was answered by, "The teeth of the board grow hair." One may interpret these answers as implying the ubiquitousness of Reality; for truth is everywhere and all-pervading: the cypress tree or the blowing wind, the howling dog or even the board that grows hair are all vibrantly alive in the present "here and now." The purport of Bodhidharma's coming from the West is to elucidate this universal Truth. One may also interpret the real purpose of the reply "The teeth of the board grow hair" as an intention on the part of the Master to knock the disciple off the track of his habituated, sequential thinking and to bring



him directly to the "state-of-beyond" by means of an apparently illogical and irrelevant answer. One may go even further and say that the Zen Master had no intention of answering the question; he was merely making a plain and straightforward statement of what he saw and felt at the moment the question was put. In this down-to-earth "plain feeling" in its primordial, genuine, and natural state lies the whole secret of Zen. Plain, yet marvelous, this feeling is the most cherished keystone of Zen—sometimes described as the *tang hsia i nien*, or *instantaneous thought*.<sup>a</sup> Because it is instantaneous, no artificiality, conceptualization, or dualistic idea could ever arise from it. In it there is no room for such things. It is only through the realization of this "instantaneous mind" that one is freed from all bondage and suffering. Never departing from this eternal "instantaneousness," the Zen Master sees everything as the great Tao—from the cypress tree to a stick of dry dung. Thus the Master made no effort to give a relevant answer; he just plainly stated what he saw and felt at that moment.

No matter what these Zen Masters meant by their answers, or how one interprets them, this indisputable fact remains: the answers given in many Zen koans are of an uncommon nature. Therefore the first lesson is to become acquainted with this Zen manner of strange "style of expression." Otherwise, Zen will only mystify and confuse one's "innocent inquiry," all to no purpose. One should remember that no matter how mysterious or how senseless a koan<sup>1</sup> appears to be, there is always something deep behind it—the strange remarks always imply *something*. Fully to decode these riddles, however, requires not only a complete mastery of Zen idiom and traditions (which is a task solely for the professional), but some direct personal *experience in Zen itself*. If one

a. Letters refer to Appendix, p. 239 ff.

lacks either one, Zen is, indeed, difficult to grasp. In any case, and for anyone, the first task is to become familiar with the "Zen styles" and traditions.

The second important lesson is to learn of the difficulties and obstacles one can expect to meet in his Zen studies. For Zen is not a subject that may be understood through superficial efforts. It presents a formidable challenge; in fact, it is the most difficult subject in Buddhism. One would be foolish to cherish a hope of understanding Zen by reading one or two books, or by sitting for a few hours in meditation. Some years of hard work, at least, are needed to achieve the goal. In any case, it is fitting and wise for both serious and casual Zen students to know what difficulties they are up against at the very outset of their studies.

The first difficulty is the apparent ungraspability and the indefinite nature of Zen. There seems to be no organized system to follow, nor any definite philosophy to learn. Contradictions and inconsistencies abound everywhere. Although these may be explained away by the so-called illogical logic of Zen, the "slippery indefiniteness" so frequently encountered remains to confound and puzzle one. For instance, the question raised by that most common koan already mentioned, "What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from the West?" has more than two hundred different answers! Here are several more of them:

A monk asked Hsiang Lin, "What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from the West?" Hsiang Lin replied, "Sitting for too long, one becomes exhausted." To the same question Chiu Feng answered, "An inch of a turtle's hair weighs nine pounds." On the other hand, Tung Shan's reply to Lung Ya was, "I will tell you when the mountain stream flows back."

There are three reasons for this ungraspability or indefiniteness of Zen:



1. The ultimate *Prajna*-Truth that Zen tries to illustrate is, itself, ungraspable and indefinable in nature.

2. Zen is a very practical teaching in that its main object is to bring individuals to Enlightenment<sup>2</sup> by the quickest and most direct route; and as each disciple differs in disposition, capacity, and state of advancement, a Zen Master must give his instructions in different ways and from different levels of approach in order to make his Zen practical and effective. This factor has been responsible for the great varieties of expressions, which further complicate the matter and make Zen more difficult to understand.

3. After the period of the Sixth Patriarch, Hui Neng (638–713), Zen gradually became an *Art*—a unique art for transmitting the *Prajna*-Truth—refusing, as all great arts do, to follow any set form, pattern, or system in expressing itself. This exceptionally liberal attitude gave birth to those radical and sometimes “wild” Zen expressions, which also contribute so greatly to the complexity and incomprehensibility of the subject.

Some brief explanations of these three points may be helpful here.

The first point: Why is the ultimate *Prajna*-Truth that Zen tries to illustrate so indefinable and ungraspable? “To define” means to settle the limits of, or to declare the exact meaning of a certain thing. “To grasp,” in the sense used here, means to comprehend the import of a thing and retain it. Since the very act of defining is to confine something within a certain boundary, it cannot be otherwise than finite, narrow, and exclusive in its nature; and again, since “to comprehend” means mentally to grasp *something*, but not *everything*, it must also be restrictive and thus limitative in its nature. But the ultimate *Prajna*-Truth that Zen tries to convey cannot possibly be a thing that is narrow, finite, or exclusive; it must be something vast, universal, and infinite

—all-inclusive and all-embracing—defying definition and designation. How, then, can Zen-Truth be otherwise than indefinable and ungraspable? The very word “defining” suggests a finger pointing to a particular object, and the word “grasping,” a hand holding something tightly and not letting it go. These two pictures vividly portray the narrow, tight, and clinging nature of the human mind. With this deplorable limitation and *tightness* deeply rooted in the human way of thinking, no wonder the free and all-inclusive *Prajna*-Truth becomes an evasive shadow forever eluding one’s grasp. This indefinable and ungraspable nature of Zen-Truth is well illustrated in the following two koans:

A. The Sixth Patriarch asked Huai Jang, “From whence do you come?”

Huai Jang replied, “I come from Mount Su.”

The Patriarch then asked, “What is it and how does it come?”

And Huai Jang answered, “Anything I say would miss the point.”

B. Fu Ta Shih said in his famous stanza:

Empty-handed I go, but the spade is in my hands;  
I walk on my feet, yet I am riding on the back of a bull;  
When I pass over the bridge,  
Lo, the bridge, but not the water, flows!

The second point: With what different instructions and from what different levels has Zen applied its practical teachings to bring the individual disciples directly to Enlightenment?

This is a very difficult question to answer because it includes all aspects of Zen Buddhism. A satisfactory reply would demand a full review of the whole field,



which is beyond the scope of this book. In fact, many Zen Masters and scholars have tried this very task, attempting to assign the different Zen instructions and the numerous Zen koans to various groups and levels, with accompanying explanations and comments, but none of them has been very successful. There are two reasons for this, first, the undissectable and unclassifiable nature of Zen itself, and second, the dearth of qualified persons who are not only capable of making such a classification, but willing as well to run against the tradition and spirit of Zen by so doing.

Zen can be explained in numerous ways because there are no definite "instructions" for Zen to follow. The great Zen Masters seldom followed any set pattern in expressing themselves or in teaching their students. However, in order to make Zen a little easier to understand, let us temporarily and arbitrarily allocate the numerous kinds of Zen expression found in the koans into the following three groups:

1. Koans that illustrate Zen-Truth through plain and direct statements, i.e., the "explicit-affirmative" type.
2. Koans that illustrate Zen-Truth through a negating approach, i.e., the "implicit-negative" type.
3. Koans that may be described as somewhat beyond, between, or encompassing types 1 and 2.

Some examples of group 1 follow:

A. Chao Chou asked Nan Chuan, "What is the Tao?" Nan Chuan answered, "The ordinary mind is Tao." Chao Chou then asked, "How can one approach it?" Nan Chuan replied, "If you want to approach it, you will certainly miss it." "If you do not approach it, how do you know it is the Tao?"

"The Tao is not a matter of knowing, nor a matter of not knowing. To know is a delusory way of thinking, and not to know is a matter of insensibility. If one can realize the Tao unmistakably, [his mind will be like] the great space—vast, void, and clear. How, then, can one regard this as *right* and that as *wrong*?" Upon hearing this remark, Chao Chou was immediately awakened.

Wu Men made the following interesting comment on the above koan: "Even though Chao Chou became enlightened, he should still work for another thirty years to graduate."

B. Master Huang Po said in his sermon, "All the Buddhas and sentient beings are nothing but one's mind. From the very no-beginning-time this Mind never arises and is not extinguished. It is neither blue nor yellow. It has no form or shape. It is neither existent nor nonexistent, old or new, long or short, big or small. It is beyond all limitation and measurement, beyond all words and names, transcending all traces and relativity. It is here now! But as soon as any thought arises [in your mind] you miss it right away! It is like space, having no edges, immeasurable and unthinkable. Buddha is nothing else but this, your very mind!"

C. The Second Patriarch asked Bodhidharma, "How can one get into Tao?" Bodhidharma replied:

Outwardly, all activities cease;  
Inwardly, the mind stops its panting.  
When one's mind has become a wall,  
Then he may [begin to] enter into the Tao.



This highly significant stanza is one of the esoteric type of koans that the Zen Masters are disinclined to discuss or elaborate. Despite its apparent "mystic" flavor and profound significance, it is very explicit and straightforward. It describes plainly the actual experience of the pre-Enlightenment state. This koan, therefore, belongs to the first group.

D. Zen Master Shen Tsan gained his enlightenment through Pai Chang. He then returned to the monastery in which he had been ordained by his "first teacher," the monk who had brought him up from childhood and who, at that time, was a very old man. One day Shen Tsan was helping his old teacher to bathe. While washing the old man's back, he said to him, "This is such a fine temple, but the Buddha in it is not at all holy!" His old teacher then turned around and looked at him, whereupon Shen Tsan commented, "Though the Buddha is not holy, he can still radiate the light." Again, one day, while the old man was reading a *sutra* near a paper-covered window, a bee tried desperately, with all its strength, to fly out of the room through the paper but was unable to get through. Shen Tsan, seeing this, said, "The world is so vast and wide that you may easily set yourself free in it. Why, then, do you foolishly bore into old, rotten paper?"

While the empty door is widely open  
How foolish it is to try to get out  
By thrusting against the window!  
Alas! How can you [Master]  
Raise your head above the slough  
By putting your nose against old, rotten papers  
For a hundred years?"

Hearing this remark, the old man laid down his book and said to Shen Tsan, "For quite a few times now, you have made unusual remarks. From whom did you gain your knowledge while you were away from home?" Shen Tsan replied, "I have reached the state of peaceful rest through the grace of Master Pai Chang. Now I have come back home to pay my debt of gratitude to you." The old teacher then prepared a great festival in his young disciple's honor, summoned the monks in the monastery to the assembly hall, and besought Shen Tsan to preach the Dharma to all. Whereupon Shen Tsan ascended to the high seat and, following the tradition of Pai Chang, preached as follows:

Singularly radiating is the wondrous Light;  
 Free is it from the bondage of matter and the senses.  
 Not binding by words and letters,  
 The Essence is nakedly exposed in its pure eternity.  
 Never defiled is the Mind-nature;  
 It exists in perfection from the very beginning.  
 By merely casting away your delusions  
 The Suchness of Buddhahood is realized.

As soon as the old teacher heard this stanza, he was immediately awakened.

E. The Sixth Patriarch's remark is another good example: "If you have come here for Dharma, you should first cast aside all mental activity and let no thoughts whatsoever arise in you. Then I shall preach the Dharma for you." After a long time of silence, the Sixth Patriarch continued, "Not thinking of good, not thinking of evil, *right at this very moment, that is your original face.*" Hui Ming was immediately enlightened.



If the phrase, "Not thinking of good, not thinking of evil," is considered by itself, this koan is easily misinterpreted as being negative or nullifying. But the real point of the Sixth Patriarch's remark is in the words that follow: "*right at this very moment, that is your original face.*" Nothing could be more direct and affirmative than this.

Now let us consider a few koans belonging to our second group, the "implicit-negative" type, that is, those which illustrate Zen-Truth through "nullifying" or abrogating expressions.

A. Said a Zen Master, "If you have a staff, I will give you one; if you do not have a staff, I will take one away from you."

B. Te Shan said, "If you cannot answer I shall give you thirty blows; if you can answer, I shall also give you thirty blows."

C. "What is the Buddha?" "A stick of dry dung."

D. A monk asked Chao Chou, "What is Chao Chou?" Chao Chou answered, "The east gate, west gate, south gate, and north gate."

E. A monk asked Tung Shan, "When the cold winter and the hot summer come, how can you avoid them?" Tung Shan answered, "Why don't you escape to a place where there is no cold winter and no hot summer?" The monk asked, "Where is that place without winter and summer?" Tung Shan replied. "In the winter the Master is frozen, and in the summer is scorched to death."

F. One day I Shan, Wu Feng, and some other monks were all attending Pai Chang. Pai Chang asked



I Shan, "How can you speak without your throat, lips, and tongue?" I Shan said, "Well, Master, in that case, you say it, please." Pai Chang replied, "I don't mind saying it to you, but I don't want to murder my posterity."

G. A monk asked Nan Chuan, "Is there any teaching that is not to be given to the people?" "Yes." "What is it then?" "It is not mind, not Buddha, and not a thing."

H. A monk was reciting the *Diamond Sutra*: ". . . if one sees that *forms are not forms*, he then sees Buddha." The Master was passing by and heard it. He then said to the monk, "You recite wrongly. It goes like this: 'If one sees that *forms are forms*, he then sees Buddha.' " The monk exclaimed, "What you have said is just opposite to the words of the *Sutra*!" The Master then replied, "How can a blind man read the *Sutra*?"

I. One day when Lin Chi saw a monk approaching him, he raised his *Fo Tzu* [duster]; the monk then bowed before him, but Lin Chi beat him. After a while another monk came by. Lin Chi again raised his *Fo Tzu*. When this monk showed no sign of respect, Lin Chi beat him as well.

J. One day Lin Chi was invited by his patron to give a sermon. When he ascended to his seat and was about to preach, Ma Ku came forward and asked him: "The All-merciful One [Avalokitesvara] has a thousand arms and a thousand eyes. Which is the main eye?" Lin Chi answered, "The All-merciful One has a thousand arms and a thousand eyes. Which is the main eye? Say it! Say it!" Ma Ku then dragged Lin Chi down forcibly from the seat and sat upon the seat himself. Lin Chi walked up to Ma Ku and

said very humbly, "I do not understand, Sir." Ma Ku was about to reply, when Lin Chi dragged him down from the seat and sat on it again himself. Ma Ku then walked out of the hall. After Ma Ku had walked out, Lin Chi also descended from the seat, and no sermon was given. (See Chapter III, "The Four Problems of Zen Buddhism," pp. 157-175.)

K. The Sixth Patriarch said in this famous stanza:

The *Bodhi* is not like a tree;  
The mirror bright is nowhere shining;  
From the beginning not a thing exists.  
Where can one find any dust collecting?

If, from the very beginning, not a thing ever *is*, how can we accuse the Zen Masters of being negatory? The fact is, they did not negate anything. What they have done is to point out our delusions in thinking of the nonexistent as existent, and the existent as nonexistent.

This rather arbitrary classification of these two types of Zen expressions is neither definite nor irrevocable and does not imply that they are either wholly affirmative or wholly negative. For the affirmative type of koan also contains a negative element, and the negative type an affirmative one. No Zen koan is absolutely one type or the other. The Zen-Truth that both types try to convey has not been modified or mutilated, despite the outward difference of presentation.

The koans in our third group are somewhat difficult to understand and explain. The Zen monks described them as the "impenetrable type," like "silver mountains and iron walls." They can, strictly speaking, only be understood by advanced persons whose profound intuitions match those of the actors, thus enabling them to discern directly and clearly the meaning of the koan



without resorting to guessing or analysis. If one is willing to risk missing the point, these koans may not be absolutely unintelligible or unexplainable, but the desirability of such an approach is also very doubtful. Nevertheless, a few examples are given here for the reader to interpret according to his own understanding and insight.

A. One day, in the monastery of Nan Chuan, the monks of the east and west wing had a dispute over the possession of a cat. They all came to Nan Chuan for arbitration. Holding a knife in one hand and the cat in the other, Nan Chuan said, "If any one of you can say the right thing, this cat will be saved; otherwise it will be cut into two pieces!" None of the monks could say anything. Nan Chuan then killed the cat. In the evening, when Chao Chou returned to the monastery, Nan Chuan asked him what he would have said had he been there at the time. Chao Chou took off his straw sandals, put them upon his head, and walked out. Whereupon Nan Chuan commented, "Oh, if you had only been here, the cat would have been saved!"

B. Teng Yin Feng was a disciple of Ma Tsu. One day he decided to visit Master Shih Tou [meaning stone, or rock]. When he mentioned this to Ma Tsu, the Master said, "Well, you can go there, but the way of Shih Tou is very slippery!" Teng Yin Feng replied, "I am taking my staff with me. I can play my role in any drama that befalls me." Whereupon he went to the abode of Shih Tou. Coming into the room, he circled the meditation bed on which Shih Tou was sitting, struck the ground with his staff, and asked, "What is the meaning of this?" Shih Tou exclaimed, "Alas, Heaven! Alas, Heaven!" Yin Feng said noth-



ing, and returned to Ma Tsu to ask his advice. Ma Tsu suggested, "Go to him again and say exactly the same thing. After he gives you an answer, immediately [and forcefully] exhale your breath with a sound of 'Whew, whew!'" Keeping this advice in mind, Yin Feng went to Shih Tou for the second time and asked him the same question. But unexpectedly Shih Tou did not give him *any* answer. Instead, he blew out his breath twice, whistling "Whew, whew" [before Yin Feng had a chance to do the same]. Failing to find any answer to this unexpected situation, Yin Feng again returned to Ma Tsu and told him what had happened. Ma Tsu then said, "Well, I told you before, the way of Shih Tou is very slippery!"

C. A monk called Tien Jan went to visit the Royal Master, Hui Chung. [Upon arriving there] he asked the attendant monk whether the Royal Master was at home. The monk replied, "Yes, but he won't receive any guests." Tien Jan said, "Oh, that is too profound and remote!" The attendant monk answered, "Even the Buddha's eyes cannot see him." Said Tien Jan, "The dragon gives birth to a baby dragon and the phoenix gives birth to a baby phoenix!"<sup>3</sup> He then left. Later, when Hui Chung got up from his sleep and learned what had happened, he beat the attendant monk. When Tien Jan heard about this he commented, "This old man deserves to be called 'the Royal Master!'" The next day Tien Jan went to visit Hui Chung again. As soon as he saw the Royal Master, he spread his "sitting shawl" on the ground [as if he were going to sit down]. Hui Chung remarked, "This is not necessary, this is not necessary." Tien Jan then retreated a few steps, upon which the Royal Master said, "All right, all right." But suddenly Tien Jan moved a few paces forward again. The Royal

Master then said, "No, no." Whereupon Tien Jan circled the Master and left. Afterward, the Master commented: "It is a long time since the days of the Holy Ones. People are now very lazy. Thirty years hence it will be hard to find a man like him."

D. Chao Chou went to visit Huang Po. When Huang Po saw him coming, he closed the door. Chao Chou then picked up a torch and shouted loudly in the congregation hall, "Fire! Fire! Help! Help!" Hearing this cry, Huang Po opened the door and came out. As soon as he saw Chao Chou he caught his arm and said, "Say it! Say it!" Chao Chou replied, "You begin to draw the bow after the thief has left."

Now we come to the third point in our discussion: Why is Zen a special Buddhist "art" of expressing the *Prajna*-Truth? The answer should now be more obvious. Zen is an "art" in the sense that, to express itself, it follows its own intuitions and inspirations, but not dogmas and rules. At times it appears to be very grave and solemn, at others trivial and gay, plain and direct, or enigmatic and "roundabout." When Zen Masters preach they do not always do so with their mouths, but with their hands and legs, with symbolic signals, or with concrete actions. They shout, strike, and push, and when questioned they sometimes run away, or simply keep their mouths shut and pretend to be dumb. Such antics have no place in rhetoric, philosophy, or religion, and can best be described as "art."

This unorthodox and radical "Zen art" is applied, roughly speaking, for four different purposes:

1. To bring the individual disciple to direct Enlightenment.
2. To illustrate a certain Buddhist teaching.
3. To express the Zen humor and wit.



4. To test the depth and genuineness of the disciple's understanding and realization.

Some examples of the first group are given below:

A. One night Te Shan was attending Master Lung Tan, who said: "It is now late. Why don't you go back to your room and retire?" Te Shan then said good night to his Master, and went out. But immediately he returned, saying: "It is very dark outside." Lung Tan lit a candle and handed it to Te Shan, then suddenly blew it out. At once Te Shan was awakened.

B. A monk called Hung Chou came to visit Ma Tsu and asked, "What is the meaning of Bodhi-dharma's coming from the West?" Ma Tsu said: "Bow down to me, first." As the monk was prostrating himself, Ma Tsu gave him a vigorous kick in the chest. The monk was at once enlightened. He stood up, clapped his hands and, laughing loudly, cried: "Oh, how wonderful this is, how marvelous this is! Hundreds and thousands of *Samadhis* and infinite wonders of the Truth are now easily realized on the tip of a single hair!" He then made obeisance to Ma Tsu. Afterwards he said to people: "Since I received that kick from Ma Tsu, I have always been cheerful and laughing."

C. Lin Chi once lived in the monastery of Huang Po. One day he was urged by the Chief Monk to raise some question before the Master, Huang Po. Lin Chi asked: "What is the gist of Buddhism?" As soon as he spoke, Huang Po beat him. Lin Chi raised this question three times and was beaten three times. Thereupon he decided to leave the monastery. Before his departure, he said to the Chief Monk: "Because of your request I was beaten three times. I am now going elsewhere to learn Zen." The Chief Monk re-



plied: "You had better say good-bye to the Master before you leave." Then, going to Huang Po privately, he said: "The man who asked the question yesterday is a novice, but he seems to be a very good and sincere fellow. If he comes and says good-bye to you, please give him some instruction." The next day when Lin Chi came to say farewell to Huang Po, he was told to visit Ta Yu. Upon Lin Chi's arrival at the residence of Ta Yu, the latter asked him: "From whence do you come?" "From Huang Po." "What does Huang Po teach?" "I asked him three times to give me the gist of Buddhism, but was beaten every time. I do not know what is wrong with my question." Ta Yu replied: "Huang Po is kind, like a mother. What he intended to do was to awaken you thoroughly. How stupid of you to come here and ask me these silly questions!" Hearing this, Lin Chi [was immediately awakened], and exclaimed: "Oh, now I know that after all there isn't very much in Huang Po's Buddhism!" Ta Yu caught his arm and cried: "You ghost who makes water in his own bed! Just now you asked me what your fault was. Now you are denouncing Huang Po's Buddhism. What truth have you seen that you dare to make such a statement?" Lin Chi immediately hit Ta Yu with his fists three times. Ta Yu fended him off, saying: "Your master is Huang Po; this has nothing to do with me." Lin Chi then returned to Huang Po. As soon as Huang Po saw him coming, he remarked: "Come and go, come and go, when will all this end?" Lin Chi replied: "This is all because of your kindness to me." Huang Po then cried spitefully: "Confound that long-tongued Ta Yu! The next time I see him I will beat him soundly for this!" "You don't have to wait until you see him," said Lin Chi. "You can beat him right now!" Huang Po commented: "This crazy man

now dares to come here and beard the lion in its den!" Lin Chi then shouted at Huang Po, who told him to go away.

The above koans show that there is no definite method that the Zen Master must use to bring his disciples to Enlightenment. A kick, a blow, a simple remark—anything will do if the state of mind of the disciple is ripe and ready to receive this final push. It goes without saying, however, that Zen kicks, blows, and "jargon" are not what they seem. If Enlightenment could be reached simply in this way, the world's slave camps and prisons would have become factories constantly turning out hundreds of enlightened beings! Again, if, merely by listening to a certain Zen remark anyone could easily be raised to the state of Enlightenment, as some people happily believe, it would be well to preserve on a few long-playing records the well-known remarks that have been effective in bringing Enlightenment, and to listen to them until we ourselves are enlightened.

Now we come to the second group: How is this "Zen art" applied to illustrate certain Buddhist teachings?

A. An old man attended Pai Chang's sermons a number of times. One day after a particular sermon, all the other listeners left, but this old man stayed on. Pai Chang then asked him: "Who are you?" The old man replied: "I am not a human being. When living on this mountain during the time of the last *kalpa*, I was once asked by one of my students: 'Are the great yogis still bound by the law of cause and effect?' I answered: 'No, they are not so bound.' Because of this misleading reply I created much bad Karma which caused me to become a fox for five hundred



successive lives. Now I beseech you to give me a correct answer, so that I may be set free from continued births as a fox." Pai Chang said to him: "All right. Now you ask me the original question." The old man then said: "Are the great yogis still bound by cause and effect?" Whereupon, Pai Chang answered: "The great yogis are *not blind* to the law of cause and effect!" Hearing this, the old man was at once awakened. He prostrated himself before Pai Chang and said: "I am now freed from my bad Karma."

No matter whether this is true or symbolic, it reflects typically the Zen attitude toward Karma, or the Law of Causation. For it points out that Zen does not disavow the basic teaching of this law which is accepted by all Buddhist schools as one of the paramount doctrines of Buddhist teaching. This shows that Zen is not nihilistic or "out-of-harness" as some people think it to be. Contrary to the belief of outsiders, Zen followers are often more earnest in performing their religious duties and more rigid in their moral conduct than others. They are not, in any sense, unscrupulous people. Zen brings freedom, but not corruption and dissoluteness. Enlightenment does not make one blind to Karmic laws, nor does it produce evildoers and transgressors.

B. Prime Minister Kuo Tze I of the Tang Dynasty was an outstanding statesman as well as a distinguished general. His success in both political and military service made him the most admired national hero of his day. But fame, power, wealth, and success could not distract the prime minister from his keen interest in and devotion to Buddhism. Regarding himself as a plain, humble, and devoted Buddhist, he often visited his favorite Zen Master to study under



him. He and the Zen Master seemed to get along very well. The fact that he held the position of prime minister, an exalted status in those days of old China, seemed to have no influence on their association. Apparently no noticeable trace of politeness on the Zen Master's part or of vain loftiness on the part of the minister existed in their relationship, which seemed to be the purely religious one of a revered Master and an obedient disciple. One day, however, when Kuo Tze I, as usual, paid a visit to the Zen Master, he asked the following question: "Your Reverence, how does Buddhism explain egotism?" The Zen Master's face suddenly turned blue, and in an extremely haughty and contemptuous manner he addressed the premier as follows: "What are you saying, you numbskull?" This unreasonable and unexpected defiance so hurt the feelings of the prime minister that a slight, sullen expression of anger began to show on his face. The Zen Master then smiled and said: "Your Excellency, this is egotism!"

The third group under discussion illustrates the manner in which the "art of Zen" may be applied to the expression of humor and wit.

A. Su Tung Po, the celebrated poet of the Sung Dynasty, was a devout Buddhist. He had a very close friend named Fo Ying, a very brilliant Zen teacher. Fo Ying's temple was on the west bank of the Yang Tse River, while Su Tung Po's house stood on the east bank. One day Su Tung Po paid a visit to Fo Ying and, finding him absent, sat down in his study to await his return. Becoming bored with waiting, he began at length to scribble on a sheet of paper that he found lying on the desk, the last words being: "Su Tung Po, the great Buddhist who cannot be

moved, even by the combined forces of the Eight Worldly Winds.”<sup>4</sup> After waiting a while longer, Su Tung Po got tired and left for home. When Fo Ying returned and saw Su Tung Po’s composition on the desk, he added the following line: “Rubbish! What you have said is no better than breaking wind!” and sent it to Su Tung Po. When Su Tung Po read this outrageous comment, he was so furious that he at once took a boat, crossed the river, and hurried to the temple again. Catching hold of Fo Ying’s arm, he cried: “What right have you to denounce me in such language? Am I not a devout Buddhist who cares only for the Dharma? Are you so blind after knowing me for so long?” Fo Ying looked at him quietly for a few seconds, then smiled and said slowly: “Su Tung Po, the great Buddhist who claims that the combined forces of the Eight Winds can hardly move him an inch, is now carried all the way to the other side of the Yang Tse River by a single puff of wind from the anus!”<sup>5</sup>

B. One day the King of Yen visited the Master Chao Chou, who did not even get up when he saw him coming. The king asked: “Which is higher, a worldly king, or the ‘King of Dharma?’” Chao Chou replied: “Among human kings I am higher; among the kings of Dharma, I am also higher.” Hearing this surprising answer, the king was very pleased. The next day a general came to visit Chao Chou, who not only got up from his seat when he saw the general coming, but also showed him more hospitality in every way than he had shown to the king. After the general had left, Chao Chou’s attendant monks asked him: “Why did you get up from your seat when a person of lower rank came to see you, yet did not do so for one of the highest rank?” Chao Chou replied: “You don’t



understand. When people of the highest quality come to see me, I do not get up from my seat; when they are of middle quality, I do; but when they are of the lowest quality, I go outside of the gate to receive them."

C. One day Chao Chou and Wen Yuan played a debating game. They agreed that whoever won the argument would be the loser, and whoever lost the argument would be the winner. As a prize, the loser should give the winner some fruit. "You speak first," said Wen Yuan to Chao Chou. So the following dialogue ensued: Chao Chou: I am an ass. Wen Yuan: I am the stomach of that ass. Chao Chou: I am the feces that the ass has dropped. Wen Yuan: I am a worm in the feces. Chao Chou: What are you doing in the feces? Wen Yuan: I spent my summer vacation there. Chao Chou: All right. Now give me the fruit.

The following story is a typical anecdote used by Zen Buddhists to ridicule those fake "Masters" who have no genuine understanding, and also deride those ignorant students who blindly follow the hocus-pocus of Zen imitators. It is an interesting story, illustrating how Zen can become downright senseless folly in the hands of the wrong persons, a not uncommon case nowadays.

D. A monk called himself the "Master of Silence." He was actually a fraud and had no genuine understanding. To sell his humbug Zen, he had two eloquent attendant monks to answer questions for him; but he himself never uttered a word, as if to show his inscrutable "Silent Zen." One day, during the absence of his two attendants, a pilgrim monk came to him and asked: "Master, what is the Buddha?" Not knowing what to do or to answer, in his confusion



he could only look desperately around in all directions—east and west, here and there—for his missing mouthpieces. The pilgrim monk, apparently satisfied, then asked him: "What is the Dharma?" He could not answer this question either, so he first looked up at the ceiling and then down at the floor, calling for help from heaven and hell. Again the monk asked: "What is the Sangha?" Now the "Master of Silence" could do nothing but close his eyes. Finally the monk asked: "What is blessing?" In desperation, the "Master of Silence" helplessly spread his hands to the questioner as a sign of surrender. But the pilgrim monk was very pleased and satisfied with this interview. He left the "Master" and set out again on his journey. On the road the pilgrim met the two attendant monks on their way home, and began telling them enthusiastically what an enlightened being this "Master of Silence" was. He said: "I asked him what Buddha is. He immediately turned his face to the east and then to the west, implying that human beings are always looking for Buddha here and there, but actually Buddha is not to be found either in the east or in the west. I then asked him what the Dharma is. In answer to this question he looked up and down, meaning that the truth of Dharma is a totality of equalness, there being no discrimination between high and low, while both purity and impurity can be found therein. In answering my question as to what the Sangha was, he simply closed his eyes and said nothing. That was a clue to the famous saying:

If one can close his eyes and sleep soundly in the deep  
 recesses of the cloudy mountains,  
 He is then a great monk.

"Finally, in answering my last question, 'What is the blessing?' he stretched out his arms and showed

both his hands to me. This implied that he was stretching out his helping hands to guide sentient beings with his blessings. Oh, what an enlightened Zen Master! How profound is his teaching!" When the attendant monks returned, the "Master of Silence" scolded them thus: "Where have you been all this time? A while ago I was embarrassed to death, and almost ruined, by an inquisitive pilgrim!"

The fourth point about the "art of Zen" covers the manner in which the Zen Masters test the understanding of their disciples. These tests take many forms, including both the "behavioral" and the "verbal."

The behavioral tests are conducted by means of radical and unexpected actions, the verbal tests by the so-called "crucial-verbal-contest" (Chinese: *chi feng wen ta*).<sup>c</sup> The latter is perhaps the most popular technique, widely applied by all Zen Buddhists. The Chinese word *wen* means "questioning," and *ta* is "answering," so that *wen ta* is "questioning-answering" or loosely "conversation." But the phrase *chi feng* is very difficult to translate, because it has manifold and subtle meanings. Literally, *chi* is "crucial," "critical," or the "key point," etc., and *feng* is "the tip of a sharp weapon"; so that *chi feng* means literally "crucial-sharp tip (or point)." This proves that the Zen "question and answer" are sharp and pointed, like the tips of two keen weapons point to point. *Chi feng*, therefore, implies that the Zen question is like a sharp, needle-pointed rapier constantly threatening to pierce to the heart without mercy; and that as soon as a poignant question is thrust at one, one must parry it and instantly return an answer just as pointed. When a Zen question is asked there is no time for ratiocination or "seeking." *Any answer that is not instantaneously, spontaneously, and effortlessly given is not acceptable to Zen.* Therefore, as Zen questions are



often unanswerable and baffling, when the student fails to reply immediately because he is trying to find the "right" answer by means of logical reasoning, this time-lag immediately exposes his lack of inner understanding. Thus, no matter how "correct" his answer may appear to be, it will not be accepted by an enlightened Zen Master. This "crucial-verbal-contest," therefore, is a special technique, devised long ago by the Zen Masters to test the inner understanding of their students. An enlightened being should be able to answer immediately any baffling question put before him, easily and without hesitation. The answer should be like lightning, like a flashing spark struck from a stone. There is no room for "cultivation," no time for "framing."

At this point I would like to relate one of my own experiences to illustrate the importance of the time element in the Zen style of conversation. Not long ago I met a theologian, and we began to discuss Buddhism, Hinduism, and other religions. He insisted that all religions are, on the highest level, basically identical, the only difference being a semantic one. He illustrated his point by saying that *Moksha* is called *Nirvana* in Buddhism, while "Buddhahood" is called *Atman* in Hinduism and "the Godhead" in Christianity. "The great truth is One," he said. "All things came from and will return to the Great One. This may be expounded in different ways, but the central Truth remains the same. And so on. I did not want to continue an argument which could go on endlessly, so I put before him the old Zen koan of Chao Chou: "If all things are to be returned to the One, to where is this One to be returned?" He was unexpectedly baffled, and failed to give me an answer. But the next day he came to see me and said: "Now I have the right answer to your question: All things are to be returned to the One, and this One is to be returned to all things." I said to him: "According



to Zen, your answer came much too late. You should have received thirty blows a long time ago." He replied: "If I had given you this answer yesterday, immediately after the question was raised, what would your comment have been then?" I said: "All right; now let us follow the Zen tradition and raise the question once more." Whereupon I asked him: "If all things are to be returned to the One, to where is this One to be returned?" He answered: "It is to be returned to all things!" To this I merely replied: "What time-wasting nonsense!"

My friend did not make any further comment, and the discussion of Buddhism *versus* other religions ended right there.

A few other stories are selected here to illustrate further how the Zen verbal-contest is used for "testing."

A. Yung Chia, a scholar of the Tien Tai school, gained his realization through reading the *Vimalakirti Sutra* without a teacher. In order to find an enlightened Master to certify his understanding, he came to the Sixth Patriarch [Hui Neng]. As soon as he saw the Patriarch, he walked around him three times and then stood before him without making the customary obeisances. Hui Neng said: "A monk is supposed to obey the rules of the Three Thousand Good Manners and the Eighty Thousand Graceful Conducts. Where does your Reverence come from that you exhibit such great pride?" Yung Chia replied: "The matter of life and death is great, and transiency lays hold of one quickly." Hui Neng: "Why, then, don't you get into the Essence of No-birth? <sup>5</sup> Would not that be the quickest way to liberation?" Yung Chia: "The Essence itself is No-birth, and liberation is beyond 'slow or quick.'" Hui Neng: "Yes. You are right." Yung Chia then bowed down to the Sixth Patriarch, bidding

him farewell, and prepared to leave. But Hui Neng stopped him and asked: "Aren't you leaving too soon?" Yung Chia: "I have never moved since the beginning; how can I be leaving too soon or too late?" Hui Neng: "Who is the one who knows the unmoved?" Yung Chia: "The sage knows this by himself." Hui Neng: "Oh, you are very well acquainted indeed with the meaning of No-birth!" Yung Chia: "How is it possible that the truth of No-birth could have any 'meaning'?" Hui Neng: "If there is no meaning, how then can it be understood?" Yung Chia: "To understand it is not to get the meaning of it." Hui Neng: "Well said, well said. Now please remain in my monastery for one night."

If the reader carefully ponders the above story he will find that in every remark the Sixth Patriarch made he laid a trap for Yung Chia; but Yung Chia, an enlightened being, sensed these traps and immediately changed his position from the attacked to the attacker. He was therefore highly praised by the Sixth Patriarch.

B. Tung Shan went to visit Ming Che. Ming Che asked him: "Where have you been lately?" Tung Shan answered: "In Hu Nan Province." Ming Che: "What is the surname of the governor there?" Tung Shan: "I do not know." Ming Che: "What is his first name then?" Tung Shan: "I do not know his first name either." Ming Che: "Doesn't he administer his office at all?" Tung Shan: "He has plenty of subordinate officers to do the work." Ming Che: "Doesn't he come out from and go in to his office at all?" Tung Shan answered nothing, and walked out. The next day Ming Che said to him: "You did not answer my question yesterday. If you can say something satisfactory today I'll invite you to dinner." Tung Shan



replied: "The governor is too dignified to come out of his office." Ming Che was satisfied with the answer, and a dinner was prepared for Tung Shan.

Outwardly, the conversation between the two was simple and plain. It seems to have been without any significance. But in fact, every remark they made had a double meaning, alluding to the truth of Zen. This story shows how the Zen Buddhists are in the habit of testing one another daily in simple talks. They are naturally trained experts in the Zen art of verbal-contest. They start to play the game whenever they have a chance. It goes without saying that the participant in the Zen "contest" must know the game first in order to match his rival. An outsider will either miss the point, or become bewildered at what is going on.

The "Behavioral Test" is often conducted through radical and astonishing maneuvers, as shown in the following stories:

A. A monk went to Te Shan, who closed the door in his face. The monk knocked and Te Shan asked, "Who is it?" The monk said, "The lion cub." Te Shan then opened the door and jumped onto the neck of the monk as though riding, and cried, "You beast! Now where do you go?" The monk failed to answer.

The term "lion cub" is used by Zen Buddhists to denote a disciple well able to understand Zen Truth; when the Masters praise or prove a disciple's understanding, this term is often used. In this case, the monk presumptuously called himself "the lion cub," but when Te Shan gave him a test by treating him like a real lion cub—when he rode on his neck, and then asked him a question—the monk failed to answer. This proved that the



monk lacked the genuine understanding he claimed to possess.

B. Chao Chou was once working as a cook in the monastery. One day he barred the kitchen door from the inside, and started a fire. In a short time the room filled with smoke and flames. He then cried out: "Fire! Fire! Help! Help!" All the monks in the monastery immediately gathered round, but they could not get in because the door was locked. Chao Chou said: "Say the right word and I will open the door. Otherwise, I won't!" Nobody could give an answer. Then Master Pu Yuan handed a *lock* to Chao Chou through the window. Chao Chou opened the door.

As not one of the monks in the monastery could give a proper answer to Chao Chou's astonishing act, their lack of inner understanding was thus fully exposed. But the interesting question here is: What *should* the monks have said to Chao Chou? What *was* the "correct" reply to his challenge? A solution to this koan has been suggested as follows:

The monks might have said to Chao Chou: "You answer the following question first, then we shall answer yours: 'Who can untie the bell-string on the neck of a tiger?'" Chao Chou replies: "The person who first tied it." The monks then say: "You have answered your own silly question. Now open the door!"

C. One day Teng Yin Feng was pushing a wheelbarrow along a narrow road in the middle of which Ma Tsu was sitting with one of his legs stretched out, thus blocking the passage of the wheelbarrow. Teng Yin Feng said: "Master, please retract your leg!" Ma Tsu replied: "I have already stretched out my leg, so there is no retraction." Teng Yin Feng then said: "I

am already pushing my wheelbarrow forward, so there is no retraction either." Saying this, he pushed the wheelbarrow over Ma Tsu's leg and injured it. Later, when they met again in the meditation hall of the temple, Ma Tsu, who had a huge ax in his hand, raised it, and said: "The one who injured my leg today, come forward!" Teng Yin Feng went up to Ma Tsu and put his neck right under the ax as if willing to receive the blow. Ma Tsu then put down his ax.

This story vividly demonstrates the courage and straightforwardness of Zen. However, these symbolic acts and the daring spirit shown should not be considered irresponsible behavior or showing off. Although they have shocked many good-hearted people, they demonstrate how distinct the Zen tradition is from all other Buddhist teaching. This story shows that Teng Yin Feng had passed his Master's test and proved himself to be a worthy disciple, while Ma Tsu demonstrated true mastership of Zen.

### *The Core of Zen:*

#### *Studies in the Three Main*

#### *Aspects of Mind*

The above stories give us a glimpse of some of the important and unusual facets of Zen. But we have still to survey briefly the basic principles underlying the teaching, which cannot be understood intellectually without some training in Mahayana philosophy in general, and an adequate knowledge of the Hua Yen philosophy,<sup>6</sup> in particular.

In China *Ch'an* (Zen Buddhism) is also known as *hsin tsung*, meaning the Mind Doctrine, or "the teach-



ing of Mind." This term is probably the best summary of all that Zen stands for, for what it teaches is the way to a full realization of Mind. Enlightenment is merely another name for the complete unfolding of the "inner" mind. Outside the deep and vast domain of Mind there is nothing to be enlightened about. Therefore, the sole aim of Zen is to enable one to understand, realize, and perfect his own mind. Mind is the subject matter and the keystone of Zen studies.

Buddhism and modern psychology both tell us that the mind has many "aspects and strata," of which some are of special interest to the field of psychology, and some to the fields of philosophy and religion. Zen, however, is interested not in these different "fields," but only in penetrating to the Essence, or the innermost core of the mind, for it holds that once this core is grasped, all else will become relatively insignificant, and crystal clear.

Before discussing this "inner core," let us see what Buddhism has to say about the general "features" of the mind. According to many Buddhist scholars, the simplest and most explicit way to delineate the "structure of mind" is to describe it as having three aspects or layers. The first aspect, or the "outer" layer, is the manifesting and active facet (Chinese: *yung*). This includes the active mental functions (of all the Eight Consciousnesses),<sup>7</sup> both noetic and emotional, abstract and symbolic, such as love, hate, desire, reason, fantasy, memory, and so forth. This is the obvious aspect, of which every human being has had direct experience. It has been a primary study in the general field of psychology, but it is a subject in which Zen has little interest.

The second aspect, or "inner" layer, of the mind is called in Chinese *hsiang*, meaning "form" or "nature." Just what is this *nature of mind*? To put it succinctly, *the nature of mind is self-awareness.* To be self-aware



means to be aware of the results of the play of consciousness, or to be conscious of the impressions received or the images captured by the consciousnesses. To be conscious of this play is an absolute, pure experience, in which there is no subject "knower" or object "known," the knower and the known having coalesced into one entity of "pure feeling." In this "pure feeling" there is no room for the dichotomy of dualism. Pure self-awareness is intrinsically and experientially non-dualistic, as the Buddhist sages and those of other religions have testified over many centuries. Self-awareness (the nature of mind) is not the function of knowing, but the knowing itself in its most intrinsic form. When one discovers this self-awareness, he finds his whole being changed. While engaging in any activity, he feels as though he were transcending the activity; he talks and walks, but he feels that his talking and walking is not the same as before—he now walks with an opened mind. He actually knows that *it is he* who is doing the walking; the director—himself—is sitting right in the center of his mind, controlling all his actions with spontaneity. He walks in bright awareness and with illumined spirit. In other words, the man who realizes self-awareness feels that he is no more the obedient servant of blind impulse, but is *his own master*. He then senses that ordinary people, blind to their innate, bright awareness, tread the streets like walking corpses!

If this self-awareness can be retained and cultivated, one will experience the illuminating aspect of the mind called by many mystics Pure Consciousness. When this illuminating consciousness is cultivated to its fullest extent, the whole universe is clearly seen to be in its embrace. Many mystics and Buddhists who have been misled consider this to be the highest state—the state of *Nirvana*, or the final stage of unification with the great Universal or "Cosmic" Consciousness. But, according

to Zen, this state is still on the edge of *Sangsara*. Yogis who have reached this state are still bound by the deep-rooted monistic idea, unable to cut off the binding-cord of subtle clinging and release themselves for the "other shore" of perfect freedom. Therefore, though self-awareness, or its cultivated form—the illuminating consciousness—is a key to all inner realizations, basically and qualitatively it is still "clinging-bound." Buddhist Enlightenment is not gained through holding onto or inflating one's self-awareness. On the contrary, it is gained through killing or crushing any attachment to this illuminating consciousness; only by transcending it may one come to the innermost core of Mind—the perfectly free and thoroughly nonsubstantial illuminating-Voidness. This illuminating-Void character, empty yet dynamic, is the Essence (Chinese: *ti*) of the mind.

The important point here is that when the word "Essence" is mentioned, people immediately think of something quintessentially concrete; and when the word "Void" is mentioned, they automatically envision a dead and static "nothingness." Both of these conceptions miss the meanings of the Chinese word *ti* (Essence) and the Sanskrit word *Sunyata* (Voidness), and expose the limitation of the finite and one-sided way of human thinking. The ordinary way of thinking is to accept the idea that something is existent or nonexistent, but never that it is both existent *and* nonexistent at the same time. *A* is *A* or not *A*; but never is it both *A* and not *A* simultaneously. In the same way, the verdict of common sense on Voidness versus existence is: "Voidness is not existence, nor is existence Voidness." This pattern of reasoning, regarded as the correct and rational way of thinking, is advocated by logicians as a *sine qua non* and is accepted by common sense for all practical purposes. But Buddhism does not invariably follow this *sine qua non*, especially when it deals with the truth of *Sunyata*. It



says: "Form does not differ from Voidness, and Voidness does not differ from Form; Form is Voidness and Voidness is Form." *Buddhism also says that it is owing to Voidness that things can exist and, because of the very fact that things do exist, they must be Void.* It emphasizes that Voidness and existence are complementary to each other and not in opposition to each other; they include and embrace, rather than exclude or negate each other. When ordinary sentient beings see an object, they see only its existent, not its void, aspect. But an enlightened being sees both aspects at the same time. This nondistinguishment, or "unification" as some people like to call it, of Voidness and existence, is the so-called Nonabiding Middle Way Doctrine of Mahayana Buddhism. Therefore, Voidness, as understood in Buddhism, is not something negative, nor does it mean absence or extinction. *Voidness is simply a term denoting the nonsubstantial and nonself nature of beings, and a pointer indicating the state of absolute nonattachment and freedom.*

Voidness is not easily explained. It is not definable or describable. As Zen Master Huai Jang has said, "Anything that I say will miss the point." Voidness cannot be described or expressed in words. This is because human language is created primarily to designate existent things and feelings; it is not adequate to express non-existent things and feelings. To attempt to discuss Voidness within the limitations of a language confined by the pattern of existence is both futile and misleading. This is why the Zen Masters shout, cry, kick, and beat. For what else can they do to express this indescribable Voidness directly and without resorting to words?

The Buddhist teaching on Voidness is comprehensive and profound, and requires much study before it can be understood. This study is an essential preliminary to the understanding of Zen.

Returning to our original topic, the Essence, or the innermost core of the mind, we must first try to define it precisely. *The Essence of mind is the Illuminating-Void Suchness.* An enlightened Zen Buddhist not only knows the illuminating aspect of the consciousness but, most important of all, he also knows the void aspect of the mind. Illumination with attachment is decried by Zen as "dead water,"<sup>a</sup> but illumination without attachment, or the Illuminating-Voidness, is praised as "the great life." The stanza<sup>8</sup> which Shen Hsiu wrote to demonstrate his understanding of Zen to the Fifth Patriarch showed that he knew only the illuminating, not the void aspect of the mind. When his "mirrorlike bright consciousness" stood against Hui Neng's "From the beginning not a thing exists!" it became so pitifully insignificant that it made him lose the race for the title of "The Sixth Patriarch of Zen." Hui Neng's "From the beginning not a thing exists!" expresses unmistakably the Essence of Mind as well as the innermost core of Zen. It was because of this deep understanding that Hui Neng won the title of the Sixth Patriarch.

There are two interesting stories which illustrate the significance of realizing the void nature of one's own mind.

A. One day an angel, flying back to Heaven, saw below him a luxuriant forest enveloped in a great, glowing halo of light. Having traveled through the sky many, many times before, he naturally had seen numerous lakes, mountains, and forests, but had never paid much attention to them. Today, however, he noticed something different—a forest surrounded by a radiant aura, from which beams of light radiated to every part of the firmament. He reasoned to himself. "Ah, there must be an enlightened being in this wood! I shall go down and see who it is."



Upon landing, the angel saw a Bodhisattva sitting quietly under a tree absorbed in deep meditation. He thought to himself, "Now let me find out what meditation he is practicing." And he opened his heavenly eyes to see on what object or idea this yogi had focused his mind. Angels can usually read the minds of yogis, but in this case, much to his surprise, the angel could not find anything at all. He circled and circled the yogi, and finally went into *Samadhi* himself, but still could not find anything in the Bodhisattva's mind. Finally the angel transformed himself into a human being, circumambulated the yogi three times, prostrated himself, and said:

"I make obeisance to the Auspicious One;  
 I pay my homage to you,  
 O Lord of all sentient beings!  
 Please awake, come out of *Samadhi*,  
 And tell me upon what you were meditating.  
 With all my miraculous powers exhausted,  
 I still have failed to find out  
 What was in your mind."

The yogi smiled. Again the angel cried. "I make my obeisance to you, I pay homage to you! On what are you meditating?" The yogi merely continued to smile, and remained silent.

B. Hui Chung, who was Zen Master to the Emperor Su Tsung of the Tang Dynasty, was highly respected by the emperor, as well as by all the Zen Buddhists of China. One day a famous Indian monk named "Great Ear Tripitaka" arrived at the Capital. This monk was said to be able to read other people's minds without the slightest difficulty or hesitation.

Word of his accomplishments having reached the Emperor, the Indian monk was summoned to the

royal palace to demonstrate his powers before Zen Master Hui Chung.

[The court and the people having assembled], Hui Chung asked Great Ear Tripitaka, "Do you truly have the power of reading others' minds?" "Yes, your Reverence, I have," he replied, and the following dialogue took place:

Hui Chung: "Tell me then, where does my mind go now?"

Great Ear Tripitaka: "Your Reverence is the Zen Master of a nation; how can you go to West Ssu Chuan to watch the boat races?"

Hui Chung: "Tell me, where does my mind go now?"

Great Ear Tripitaka: "Your Reverence is the Zen Master of a nation; how can you go to the bridge of Tien Ching to watch the monkeys at play?"

After a moment of silence, Hui Chung asked him, "Now, where does my mind go?"

This time Great Ear Tripitaka concentrated with intense effort for a long time, but he could not find anywhere a single thought of the Zen Master [and had to admit his failure]. Whereupon Hui Chung retorted, "You ghost of a wild fox! Where is your telepathic power now?"

Before concluding this discussion on "the three aspects of the mind," I must make one point very clear. This division of the mind into three "aspects" or "layers" should not be taken too literally, because, in fact, no such "aspects" or "layers" exist. Mind is one great Whole, without parts or divisions. The manifesting, illuminating, and nonsubstantial characteristics of Mind exist simultaneously and constantly—inseparable and indivisible in their totality. It is only for the sake of giving the reader a clearer comprehension of the matter that these "aspects" are introduced at all.



### *Four Vital Points in Zen Buddhism*

A great many misconceptions about Zen have arisen in the West over several vital points taken for granted in the East but not understood or appreciated by the Western mind. First, in the study of Zen, it is important to learn not only the teaching itself, but also something about *the mode of life* followed by Zen students in Oriental countries. Applied inwardly, Zen is an "experience" and a "realization," or a teaching that brings one to these states; but outwardly Zen is mainly a tradition and *a way of living*. Therefore, to understand Zen properly, one should study not only its doctrine, but also its way of life. At least a passing acquaintance with the monastic life of Zen monks would be a very valuable aid to a better understanding of Zen.

When reading Zen koans, we often come across the statement that a monk was immediately enlightened after hearing a certain remark, or after receiving a blow from his Zen Master. For instance, when Chao Chou heard Nan Chuan say "The Tao is not a matter of knowing or of not knowing . . . , " he was at once enlightened; when Hung Chou was kicked by Ma Tsu, he was at once enlightened; and so forth. This may give the impression that "Enlightenment" is very easy to come by. But these "little" koans, often consisting of less than a hundred words, are merely a *fraction* of the whole story. Their background was seldom sketched in by the Zen monks who first wrote them down, because the monks did not think it necessary to mention their common background to people who were brought up in the Zen tradition and knew it clearly. The monks thought that nobody could be so foolish as to regard "Enlighten-

ment" as immediately attainable merely by hearing a simple remark such as "a stick of dry dung" or by receiving a kick or a blow, without previously having had the "preparedness" of a ripened mind. To them it was obvious that only because the mental state of a Zen student had reached its maturity could he benefit from a Master's kicks or blows, shouts or cries. They knew that this maturity of mind was a state not easily come by. It was earned with tears and sweat, through many years of practice and hard work. Students should bear this in mind and remember that most of the Zen koans they know *are only the high-lights of a play and not the complete drama*. These koans tell of the fall of ripened "apples," but are not the *biographies* of these apples, whose life stories are a long tale of delights and sorrows, pleasures and pains, struggles and bitter trials. The Zen Master shakes the apple tree and the ripened fruit falls; but on the swaying branches the unripened fruit will still remain.

One should always remember also that the majority of Zen students in the Orient are monks who have devoted their lives to the work of Zen. They have only one aim: to gain Enlightenment; they have only one business in life: to practice Zen; the life they lead is a simple, monastic one; and there is only one way through which they learn Zen—by living and practicing with their Masters for a very long period. Under these circumstances they see Zen, hear Zen, taste Zen, and even smell Zen all of the time. Before they become Zen "graduates," they live as "apprentices" with their teachers for many years. They have ample time and opportunity to ask questions and to receive instructions directly from their Masters. How can one fail to learn Zen when he spends his whole life under such ideal conditions? In addition, these student monks can travel at will to visit one Master after another until they find the



one who can help them most. The celebrated Zen Master, Chao Chou, was said, even at the age of eighty, to have continued traveling to various places to learn more of Zen! On the other hand, Hui Chung, the national Master of the Tang Dynasty, remained in a mountain hermitage for forty years. Chang Chin meditated for twenty years, thus wearing out seven meditation seats! These are concrete examples of actual Zen lives. These Zen Masters were no fools; they knew all the outcry concerning the "here and now," the "ordinary mind," and "abrupt Enlightenment." But still they persisted in working hard at Zen all their lives. Why? Because they knew from their direct experience that Zen is like a vast ocean, an inexhaustible treasury full of riches and wonders. One may behold this treasury, reach toward it, even take possession of it, and still not fully utilize or enjoy it all at once. It usually takes quite a while to learn how to use an immense inheritance wisely, even after being in possession of it for some time. This is also true in the work of Zen. Zen only *begins* at the moment when one first attains *Satori*; before that one merely stands outside and looks at Zen intellectually. In a deeper sense, *Satori is only the beginning, but is not the end of Zen*. This is shown clearly in the discourses of Zen Master Po Shan, and the discussion on "Zen Enlightenment," in Chapters II and III, respectively.

There is another important facet of Zen which has not yet been fully explained to the West. In the study of Zen, it is advisable to become acquainted with two Chinese terms frequently employed by Zen Buddhists: *chien* and *hsing*. Used as a verb, *chien* means "to see" or "to view"; used as a noun, it means "the view," "the understanding," or "the observation." *Hsing* means "the practice," "the action," or "the work." It, too, can be used either as a noun or as a verb. *Chien* in its broader sense implies the over-all understanding of the

Buddhist teaching; but in Zen it not only denotes the understanding of Zen principles and truth, but often implies also the awakened view that springs from the "Wu" (*Satori*) experience. *Chien*, in this sense, can be understood as "seeing reality" or "a view of reality." But while it signifies the seeing of reality, it does not imply the "possession," or "mastery" of reality. A Zen proverb says: "Reality [Chinese: *li*] can be seen in an abrupt manner, but the matter [Chinese: *shih*] should be cultivated step by step." In other words, after one has attained *Satori*, he should cultivate it until it reaches its full maturity, until he has gained great power and flexibility (Chinese: *ta chi ta yung*).<sup>9</sup> This after-*Satori* cultivation, together with the before-*Satori* searching and striving, is what Zen Buddhists call *hsing*, "the practice" or "the work." Zen Master Yuan Chin said, "The entire work of Zen that one may accomplish in one's whole lifetime may be summarized in the following ten steps, which can be used as a yardstick to measure or judge one's realization and accomplishment. The ten successive steps<sup>10</sup> are:"

"1. A Zen student should believe that there is a teaching (Zen) transmitted outside of the general Buddhist doctrine.

"2. He should have a definite knowledge of this teaching.

"3. He should understand why both the sentient being and the insentient being can preach the Dharma.

"4. He should be able to see the 'Essence' [Reality] as if beholding something vivid and clear, right in the palm of his hand; and his step should always be firm and steady.

"5. He should have the distinguishing 'Eye-of-Dharma.'



"6. He should walk on the 'Path-of-the-Birds' and the 'Road-of-the-Beyond' (or 'Road-of-Wonder').

"7. He should be able to play both the positive and negative roles [in the drama of Zen].

"8. He should destroy all heretical and misleading teachings and point out the correct ones.

"9. He should acquire great power and flexibility.

"10. He should himself enter into the action and practice of different walks of life."

Thus Zen work consists of two main aspects, the "View" and the "Action," and both are indispensable. A Zen proverb says: "To gain a view, you should climb to the top of a mountain and look from there; to begin the journey [of Zen] you should go down to the bottom of the sea, and from there start walking." Although the edifice of Zen is supported by these two main pillars, the "View" and the "Action," Zen teaching lays most of its stress on the former. This is attested to by the great Master, I Shan, who said: "Your view, but not your action, is the one thing that I care about." That is why the Zen Masters put all their emphasis on *Satori* and concentrate their efforts on bringing their disciples directly to it. Being a most practical and straightforward teaching, Zen seeks to brush aside all secondary matters and discussions and to point directly to *chien*—the seeing or viewing of Reality. This is shown in the whole tradition of Zen. The emphasis on the "View" is witnessed by innumerable Zen koans and Zen sayings. Perhaps the most expressive one is Master Pai Chang's remark: "If the disciple has a view equal to his Master, he can, at most, accomplish but half of what his Master has achieved. Only when the disciple has a view surpassing that of his Master is he deserving of the Instruction."

As long as one has this View within himself, he is in

Zen; carrying wood, fetching water, sleeping, walking—all his daily activities have become the miraculous performance of Zen. Thus the plain and ordinary mind is the Buddha's Mind; "here and now" is the paradise of the Pure Land; without bringing the *Trikaya*<sup>11</sup> of Buddhahood into being, one is equal to Buddha. For the awakened Zen Buddhist holds the Essence of God, the Heart of Buddha, in his hand. With this invaluable treasure in his possession, what else does he need? This is why the outstanding Zen Buddhist, Pang Wen, said: "Carrying wood and fetching water are miraculous performances; and I and all the Buddhas in the Three Times breathe through one nostril." This high-spirited, bold *View* is truly the pinnacle of Zen.

The spirit as well as the tradition of Zen is fully reflected in its emphasis on *chien* rather than *hsing*. Therefore, though Satori is *merely the beginning, it is nevertheless the Essence of Zen. It is not all of Zen, but it is its Heart.*

Finally, Zen has a mystic or supernatural side which is an essential part of its nature. Without this it could not be the *religion* that basically it still is, and it would lose its position as the most humorous actor in the Buddhist play. The five stories that follow illustrate the Zen way of performing miracles and its cynical manner of poking fun at them.

A. Zen Master Yin Feng of the Yuan Ho period of the Tang Dynasty was in the habit of staying at Mount Heng, in Hu Nan Province, Central South China, in the winter; and at Mount Ching Liang in Shan Hsi Province, North China, in the summer. One summer, a revolution broke out as he reached Huai Ssu on his way to Mount Wu Tai [another name for Mount Ching Liang]. The insurgent general, Wu Yuan Chi, and his soldiers were fighting the national



army. The battles went on, and neither side had as yet gained the upper hand. Master Yin Feng then said to himself, "I think I'll go to the front and try to reconcile them." So saying, he threw his staff up into the sky and, riding upon it, reached the battlefield in short order. The soldiers on both sides, awestruck at the sight of a flying man, promptly forgot about fighting. Their hatreds and ill will were thus pacified and as a result the battles came to an end.

After performing this miracle Yin Feng was afraid that such a demonstration might lead people into misunderstandings, so he went to the Diamond Cave of Mount Wu Tai, and decided to leave this world. He said to the monks there: "On different occasions I have seen many monks die when lying or sitting down; have any of you seen a monk who died while standing up?" They answered: "Yes, we have seen a few people who died in that way." Yin Feng then asked: "Have you ever seen anyone die upside down?" The monks replied: "No, we never did." Yin Feng then declared: "In that case, I shall die upside down." Saying this, he put his head on the earth, raised his legs up toward Heaven, balanced himself in an upside-down position, and died. The corpse stood there solidly, with its clothes adhering to it—nothing falling down.

The monks then held a conference over this embarrassing corpse, and finally decided to cremate it. The news spread like wildfire, and people from near and far came to see this unique spectacle, all moved to astonishment by such a miracle. But the problem of how to take the corpse to the cremation ground still remained unsolved, as no one could move it.

In the meantime Yin Feng's sister, who was a nun, happened to pass by. Seeing the commotion, she pushed her way forward, approached the corpse, and

cried, "Hey! You good-for-nothing scoundrel of a brother! When you were alive you never did behave yourself; now you won't even die decently, but try to bewilder people by all these shenanigans!" Saying this, she slapped the corpse's face and gave the body a push, and immediately it fell to the ground. [From then on, the funeral proceeded without interruption.]

B. Tao Tsung was the teacher of the famous Zen Master, Yun Men. It was he who opened the mind of Yun Men by hurting his leg. Later Tao Tsung returned to his native town of Mu Chow, as his mother was very old and needed someone to support her. From then on he lived with his mother and earned a living for her and himself by making straw sandals.

At that time a great rebellion broke out, led by a man called Huang Tsao. As the insurgent army approached Mu Chow, Tao Tsung went to the city gate and hung a big sandal upon it. When Huang Tsao's army reached the gate they could not force it open, no matter how hard they tried. Huang Tsao remarked resignedly to his men, "There must be a great sage living in this town. We had better leave it alone." So saying, he led his army away and Mu Chow was saved from being sacked.

C. Zen Master Pu Hua had been an assistant to Lin Chi. One day he decided it was time for him to pass away, so he went to the market place and asked the people in the street to give him a robe as charity. But when some people offered him the robe and other clothing, he refused them. Others offered him a quilt and blanket, but he refused these also, and went off with his staff in his hand. When Lin Chi heard about this, he persuaded some people to give Pu Hua a coffin instead. So a coffin was presented to him. He smiled at this, and remarked to the donors: "This



fellow, Lin Chi, is indeed naughty and long-tongued." He then accepted the coffin, and announced to the people, "Tomorrow I shall go out of the city from the east gate and die somewhere in the east suburb." The next day many townspeople, carrying the coffin, escorted him out of the east gate. But suddenly he stopped and cried: "Oh, no, no! According to geomancy, this is not an auspicious day! I had better die tomorrow in the south suburb." So the following day they all went out of the south gate. But then Pu Hua changed his mind again, and said to the people that he would rather die the *next* day in the west suburb. Far fewer people came to escort him the following day; and again Pu Hua changed his mind, saying he would rather postpone his departure from this world for one more day, and die in the north suburb *then*. By this time people had grown tired of the whole business, so nobody escorted him when the next day came. Pu Hua even had to carry the coffin by himself to the north suburb. When he arrived there, he sat down inside the coffin, holding his staff, and waited until he saw some pedestrians approaching. He then asked them if they would be so good as to nail the coffin up for him after he had died. When they agreed, he lay down in it and passed away. The pedestrians then nailed the coffin up as they had promised to do.

Word of this event soon reached town, and people began to arrive in swarms. Someone then suggested that they open the coffin and take a look at the corpse inside. When they did, however, they found, to their surprise, nothing in it! Before they had recovered from this shock, suddenly, from the sky above, they heard the familiar sound of the small bells jingling on the staff which Pu Hua had carried with him all his life. At first the jingling sound was very loud, as if it came from close at hand; then it became fainter and

fainter, until finally it faded entirely away. Nobody knew where Pu Hua had gone.

These three stories show that Zen is not lacking in "supernatural" elements, and that it shares "miracle" stories and wonder-working claims with other religions. But Zen never boasts about its achievements, nor does it extol supernatural powers to glorify its teachings. On the contrary, the tradition of Zen has shown unmistakably its scornful attitude toward miracle working. Zen does not court or care about miraculous powers of any sort. What it does care about is the understanding and realization of that *wonder of all wonders*—the indescribable *Dharmakaya*—which can be found in all places and at all times. This was clearly demonstrated in the words of Pang Wen when he said. "To fetch water and carry wood are both miraculous acts."

Many koans prove the disdainful attitude toward supernatural powers that Zen has adopted. Zen not only discourages its followers from seeking these powers, but also tries to demolish such powers if it can, because it considers all these "powers," "visions," and "revelations" to be distractions that often lead one astray from the right path. The following story is a good example of this spirit:

D. Huang Po once met a monk and took a walk with him. When they came to a river, Huang Po removed his bamboo hat and, putting aside his staff, stood there trying to figure out how they could get across. But the other monk walked over the river without letting his feet touch the water, and reached the other shore at once. When Huang Po saw this miracle he bit his lip and said. "Oh, I didn't know he could do this; otherwise I should have pushed him right down to the bottom of the river!"



Despite all their mockery and dislike of wonder-working acts and supernatural powers, the accomplished Zen Masters were by no means incapable of performing them. They could do so if they deemed it necessary for a worthwhile purpose. *These miraculous powers are simply the natural by-products of true Enlightenment.* A perfectly enlightened being must possess them, otherwise his Enlightenment can at most be considered as only partial.

The last story of this series is particularly significant.

E. Chiu Feng was a disciple-attendant of Master Shih Shuang. When Shih Shuang died, all the monks in his monastery held a conference and decided to nominate the Chief Monk there as the new Abbot. But Chiu Feng arose and said to the assembly, "We must know first whether he truly understands the teaching of our late Master." The Chief Monk then asked: "What question have you in mind concerning our late Master's teachings?" Chiu Feng replied. "Our late Master said, 'Forget everything, stop doing anything, and try to rest completely! Try to pass ten thousand years in one thought! Try to be the cold ashes and the worn-out tree! Try to be near the censer in the old temple! Try to be a length of white silk.' I do not ask you about the first part of this admonition, but only about the last sentence: 'Try to be a length of white silk.' What does it mean?" The Chief Monk answered: "This is only a sentence to illustrate the subject matter of the One Form."<sup>12</sup> Chiu Feng then cried: "See! I knew you didn't understand our late Master's teaching at all!" The Chief Monk then asked: "What understanding of mine is it that you do not accept? Now light a stick of incense for me. If I cannot die before it has burned out, *then* I'll admit I do not understand what our

late Master meant!" Whereupon the incense was lighted and the Chief Monk assumed his seat, sitting straight as a pole. And lo, before the stick of incense was completely consumed, the Chief Monk had actually passed away right there where he sat! Chiu Feng then tapped the corpse's shoulder and said, "You can sit down and die immediately all right; but as to the meaning of our late Master's words, you still have not the slightest idea!"

If Zen is to be considered as the quintessential and supreme teaching of Buddhism, a teaching that can actually bring one to liberation from the miseries of life and death, and not merely as useless babble, good only for a pastime, it must produce concrete and indisputable evidence to prove its validity to all. Mere words cannot sustain a religion; empty talk cannot convince people nor uphold the faith of believers. If Zen had not consistently brought forth "accomplished beings" who, on the one hand, realized the Inner Truth and, on the other, gave concrete evidence of their Enlightenment, it could never have overshadowed all the other Schools of Buddhism in its motherland and survived for over a thousand years. Buddhist Enlightenment is not an empty theory or a matter of wishful thinking. It is a concrete fact that can be tried and proved. In the preceding story, when the Chief Monk was challenged by Chiu Feng, he courageously testified to his understanding by actually liberating his consciousness-soul from his physical body within a few minutes. Who, without having some inner realization of Zen Truth, could possibly perform such a remarkable feat? But, surprisingly, even this outstanding achievement failed to meet the standard of Zen! To be able to free oneself from life and death in their literal sense is still far from the objective of the Zen Masters' teaching!



Judging Zen from this standpoint, how pitiful we find the babblings of those "experts" who know nothing but Zen prattle, and who not only abhor the existence of this type of koan, but purposely misinterpret it in their "Zen" preachings and writings—or completely omit it as if it had never existed! It is suggested, therefore, that the reader of this book look carefully for the differences between genuine and imitation Zen—between the Zen which comes from the heart and that which comes from the mouth, between the Zen of concrete realization and that of mere words, between the Zen of true knowledge and that of prevarication. Drawing these discriminatory lines, the reader will no longer be mystified, or bewildered by false prophets of Zen.

The above analytical and somewhat conservative approach may be said with some truth to "murder" Zen. But it is the only way to present Zen authentically and at the same time make it a little clearer to Westerners who, with no other means at hand, must for the most part approach the subject intellectually and follow a safer, if slower, way than that of the East to find and take the first step on the journey toward Enlightenment.

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II.  
The  
Practice  
of  
Zen

*A General Review  
of Zen Practice*

Zen practice is not a subject that uninitiated scholars can deal with competently through mere intellection or pedantry. Only those who have had the *experience itself* can discuss this topic with authoritative intimacy.

It would be folly, therefore, not to follow the advice of the accomplished Zen Masters, not to reflect on their life stories—stories that abound with accounts of the actual experience gained during their struggles in Zen. The discourses and autobiographies of the Zen Masters have proved, in past centuries, to be invaluable documents for Zen students, and they are accepted and cherished by all Zen seekers in the Orient as infallible guides and companions on the journey toward Enlightenment.

To those who cannot find access to a competent Zen



Master—a not uncommon case nowadays—these documents should be of inestimable value and usefulness.

I have therefore translated herein a number of the most popular and important discourses and autobiographies of the reputable Zen Masters, to show the reader in what manner they practiced Zen, through what efforts they gained their Enlightenment, and, above all, what they have to say to us on these vital subjects.

In order to help the reader to understand these discourses with greater ease, I shall here give a very brief account of the history of Zen, and also point out several important facts concerning its practice.

Ch'an (Zen) was first introduced into China by the Indian monk Bodhidharma (470–543), in the early part of the sixth century, and was established by the Sixth Patriarch, Hui Neng (638–713), around the beginning of the eighth century. Hui Neng had several prominent disciples, two of whom, Huai Jang (?–740), and Hsing Ssu (?–775), were extremely influential. Each of them had one outstanding disciple, namely Ma Tsu (?–788) and Shih Tou (700–790), respectively; and they, in turn, had several remarkable disciples who founded, either directly or indirectly, the five major Zen sects existing in those times, i.e., Lin Chi, Tsao Tung, I Yang, Yun Men, and Fa Yen. As time went on all five of these major sects were consolidated into either the Tsao Tung (Japanese: Soto) or the Lin Chi (Japanese: Rinzai) sect. The Tsao Tung and Lin Chi are thus the only sects of Zen Buddhism extant today.

Zen, after the period of Hui Neng, spread to almost every corner of China and gradually became the most popular school of Buddhism in that country. It was widely accepted and practiced by both monks and laymen from all walks of life. Through the efforts of Hui Neng and his disciples, the unique styles and traditions

of Zen, which I have outlined briefly in the preceding chapter, gradually emerged.

The first two hundred years of Zen produced in succession six Patriarchs—Bodhidharma being the first and Hui Neng the sixth. During this time Zen kept its plain and original Indian style without the introduction of any radical or bizarre elements such as are found in the later periods of Zen history. In this early period Zen was unembellished, understandable, outspoken, and matter-of-fact. Because of a lack of documentation concerning Zen practice in this early period, we do not know very clearly the exact manner in which Zen was actually practiced. We can only say with assurance that there were no koan exercises, and no shouting, kicking, crying, or beating “performances” such as those found at the present time. Several things, however, happened during this epoch. First, certain verbal instructions concerning Zen practice must have been handed down through the succession from Bodhidharma to Hui Neng. Second, these instructions must have been practical and applicable teachings which were qualitatively different from the ungraspable koan-type exercises characteristic of later times. Third, Zen practice must have followed mainly the Indian tradition, largely identical with the teaching of Mahamudra,<sup>1</sup> which was introduced from India into Tibet and has been widely practiced in that country since the ninth century. At present the Tsao Tung sect is perhaps the only Zen sect that still retains some Indian elements in its teaching, and is probably the only source from which we may deduce some information about the original practice of Zen.

There exists, however, a great dearth of documentation for the practical instructions which must have been given by the Tsao Tung Masters. One of the reasons that may have contributed to this shortage of written material is the “secret tradition” of the Tsao Tung sect,



which discourages its followers from putting verbal instructions down in writing. Thus time has erased all traces of many such oral teachings.

In the old days many Zen Masters of the Tsao Tung sect taught their disciples in a most secret way. The phrase "Enter into the Master's room and receive the secret instruction" (Chinese: *ju shih mi shou*)<sup>a</sup> was widely used. This practice was much criticized by the followers of the Lin Chi sect, notably by the eloquent Master Tsung Kao (1089-1163).

For many generations the Tsao Tung and the Lin Chi have been the two "rival" Zen sects, each offering, in certain respects, a different approach to the Zen practices. Because of these different approaches the individual student can choose the one that suits him best and helps him most. The superiority or preferability of the plain, tangible, "explicit" Indian approach to Zen, advocated by the Tsao Tung sect, over the bewildering, ungraspable, and "esoteric" Chinese Ch'an approach represented by the Lin Chi sect, has always been a controversial subject. Objectively speaking, both of these approaches possess their merits and demerits, their advantages as well as their disadvantages. If one wants to by-pass the recondite and cryptic Zen elements and try to grasp directly a plain and tangible instruction that is genuinely practical, the Tsao Tung approach is probably the more suitable. But if one wants to penetrate more deeply to the core of Zen, and is willing to accept the initial hardships and frustrations, the approach of the Lin Chi sect—the most prevalent and popular Zen sect in both China and Japan today—is probably preferable. I personally do not think the Tsao Tung approach is a poor one, although it may not produce a realization as deep and as "free" as that of the Lin Chi in the beginning stages. However, the plain, tangible approach of Tsao Tung may be much better suited to

the people of the twentieth century. This is mainly because the koan exercise—the mainstay if not the only stay of the Lin Chi practice—is too difficult and too uncongenial for the modern mind. Besides, in practicing Zen by means of the koan exercise, one must constantly rely on a competent Zen Master from beginning to end. This again presents a difficult problem. A third objection to the koan exercise is that it tends to create a constant strain on the mind, which will not relieve, but only intensify, the deadly mental tensions which many people suffer in this atomic age. Nevertheless, if one can receive constant guidance under a competent Zen Master and live in a favorable environment, the koan exercise may prove to be a better method in the long run.

Nowadays, when Zen practice is mentioned, people immediately think of the koan (or *Hua Tou*) exercise as though there were no other way of practicing Zen. Nothing could be more mistaken. The *Hua Tou* exercise did not gain its popularity until the latter part of the Sung Dynasty in the eleventh century. From Bodhidharma to Hui Neng, and from Hui Neng all the way through Lin Chi and Tang Shan—a total period of approximately four hundred years—no established system of *Hua Tou* exercises can be traced. The outstanding Zen Masters of this period were great “artists”; they were very flexible and versatile in their teaching, and never confined themselves to any one system. It was mainly through the eloquent Master Tsung Kao (1089–1163) that the *Hua Tou* exercise became the most popular, if not the only, means by which Zen students have practiced during the past eight centuries. Here the interesting question is, How, before the popularization and standardization of the koan exercise, did students of older times practice Zen? How did those great figures, Hui Neng, Ma Tsu, Huang Po, and Lin Chi, themselves practice Zen? We have sufficient reason to believe that



in the old days the "serene-reflection" type of meditation now found in the teaching of the Tsao Tung sect was probably the mainstay of Zen meditation techniques.

Now precisely what *are* the teachings of both sects; and exactly how does the Tsao Tung approach differ from that of the Lin Chi? To answer these questions as concisely as possible, the Tsao Tung approach to Zen practice is to teach the student how to *observe his own mind in tranquility*. The Lin Chi approach, on the other hand, is to *put the student's mind to work on the "solution" of an unsolvable problem* known as the koan, or *Hua Tou*, exercise. The former may be regarded as overt or exoteric, the latter as covert or esoteric. If, in the beginning, the student can be properly guided by a good teacher, the former approach is not too difficult to practice. If one can get the "verbal instructions" from an experienced Zen Master he will soon learn how to "observe the mind in tranquility" or, in Zen idiom, how to practice the "serene-reflection" type of meditation.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to this "serene-reflection" practice of the Tsao Tung school, the Lin Chi approach of the koan exercise is completely out of the beginner's reach. He is put purposely into absolute darkness until the light unexpectedly dawns upon him.

Before discussing koans in detail, let us comment on the Tsao Tung technique of "observing one's mind in tranquility"—the original and more "orthodox" Zen practice which has been neglected for so long in the overwhelming attention given to koan exercises.

#### PRACTICING ZEN THROUGH OBSERVING ONE'S MIND IN TRANQUILITY

The Zen practice of the Tsao Tung School can be summed up in these two words: "serene reflection"

(Chinese: *mo chao*). This is clearly shown in the poem from the "Notes on Serene-Reflection," by the famous Zen Master, Hung Chih, of the Tsao Tung school:

Silently and serenely one forgets all words;  
 Clearly and vividly *That* appears before him.  
 When one realizes it, it is vast and without edges;  
 In its Essence, one is clearly aware.  
 Singularly reflecting is this bright awareness,  
 Full of wonder is this pure reflection.  
 Dew and the moon,  
 Stars and streams,  
 Snow on pine trees,  
 And clouds hovering on the mountain peaks—  
 From darkness, they all become glowingly bright;  
 From obscurity, they all turn to resplendent light.  
 Infinite wonder permeates this serenity;  
*In this Reflection all intentional efforts vanish.*  
 Serenity is the final word [of all teachings];  
 Reflection is the response to all [manifestations].  
 Devoid of any effort,  
 This response is natural and spontaneous  
 Disharmony will arise  
 If in reflection there is no serenity;  
 All will become wasteful and secondary  
 If in serenity there is no reflection  
 The Truth of serene-reflection  
 Is perfect and complete.  
 Oh look! The hundred rivers flow  
 In tumbling torrents  
 To the great ocean!

Without some explanations and comments on this poem, the meaning of "serene-reflection" may still be enigmatic to many readers. The Chinese word, *mo*, means "silent" or "serene"; *chao* means "to reflect" or "to observe." *Mo chao* may thus be translated as "serene-reflection" or "serene-observation." But both the



"serene" and the "reflection" have special meanings here and should not be understood in their common connotations. The meaning of "serene" goes much deeper than mere "calmness" or "quietude"; it implies transcendency over all words and thoughts, denoting a state of "beyond," of pervasive peace. The meaning of "reflection" likewise goes much deeper than its ordinary sense of "contemplation of a problem or an idea." It has no savor of mental activity or of contemplative thought, but is a mirror-like clear awareness, ever illuminating and bright in its pure self-experience. To speak even more concisely, "serene" means the tranquility of no-thought (Chinese: *wu nien*), and "reflection" means vivid and clear awareness. Therefore, serene-reflection is *clear awareness in the tranquility of no-thought*. This is what the *Diamond Sutra* meant by "not dwelling on any object, yet the mind arises." The great problem here is, how can one put his mind *into* such a state? To do so requires verbal instruction and special training at the hands of a teacher. The "wisdom eye" of the disciple must first be opened, otherwise he will never know how to bring his mind to the state of serene-reflection. If one knows how to practice this meditation, he has already accomplished something in Zen. The uninitiated never know how to do this work. This serene-reflection meditation of the Tsao Tung sect, therefore, is not an ordinary exercise of quietism or stillness. It is the meditation of Zen, of *Prajnaparamita*. Careful study of the preceding poem will show that the intuitive and transcendental "Zen elements" are unmistakably there.

The best way to learn this meditation is to train under a competent Zen Master. If, however, you are unable to find one, you should try to work through the following "Ten Suggestions"—the quintessential instructions on Zen practice that the author has learned through great difficulties and long years of Zen study. It is his sincerest

hope that they will be valued, cherished, and practiced by some serious Zen students in the West.

*The Ten Suggestions on Zen Practice:*

1. Look inwardly at your state of mind before any thought arises.

2. When any thought does arise, cut it right off and bring your mind back to the work.

3. Try to look at the mind all the time.

4. Try to remember this "looking-sensation" in daily activities.

5. Try to put your mind into a state as though you had just been shocked.

6. Meditate as frequently as possible.

7. Practice with your Zen friends the circle-running exercise (as found in Chapter II, in the "Discourses of Master Hsu Yun").

8. In the midst of the most tumultuous activities, stop and look at the mind for a moment.

9. Meditate for brief periods with the eyes wide-open.

10. Read and reread as often as possible the *Prajnaparamita Sutras*, such as the *Diamond* and *Heart Sutras*, the *Prajna of Eight Thousand Verses*, the *Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra*, etc.

Hard work on these ten suggestions should enable anyone to find out for himself what "serene-reflection" means.

## PRACTICING ZEN THROUGH THE KOAN EXERCISE

What is the koan exercise? "Koan" is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese phrase *kung-an*; and the original meaning of *kung-an* is "the document of an official transaction on the desk." But the term is used by Zen Buddhists in a slightly different manner in that it de-



notes a certain dialogue or event that has taken place between the Zen Master and his student. For example, "A monk asked Master Tung Shan, 'Who is Buddha?' [To which the Master replied] 'Three *chin* [measures] of flax!'" ; or, "A monk asked Master Chao Chou, 'What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from the West?' 'The cypress tree in the courtyard.'" All the Zen stories, both short and long, related in the preceding chapter are koans. *In short*, "koan" means a Zen story, a Zen situation, or a Zen problem. The koan exercise usually implies working on the solution of a Zen problem such as "who is the one who recites the name of Buddha?"; or "All things are reducible to one; to what is the one reducible?"; or the single word *Wu* (meaning "No" or "Nothing"); and the like. Since "koan" has now become almost an established term, widely used in the West, it seems unnecessary always to use in its place the original Chinese term *Hua Tou*. Both "koan" and *Hua Tou* are, therefore, used here in the general and in the specific sense, respectively. In China Zen Buddhists seldom use the term "koan exercise"; instead, they say, "*Hua Tou* exercise," or "*tsen Hua Tou*," <sup>2</sup> meaning "to work on a *Hua Tou*." What is this *Hua Tou*? *Hua* means "talking," "remark," or "a sentence"; *tou* means "ends," applicable either in the sense of the beginning or the ending of something; *hua tou* thus means "the ends of a sentence." For example, "Who is the one who recites the name of Buddha?" is a sentence, the first "end" of which is the single word "Who." To put one's mind into this single word "who," and try to find the solution of the original question, is an example of the "*Hua Tou* exercise." "Koan," however, is used in a much wider sense than *Hua Tou*, referring to the whole situation or event, while *Hua Tou* simply means the ends or, more specifically, the critical words or point of the question. To give another exam-

ple, "A monk asked Master Chao Chou, 'Does a dog have the Buddha nature?' Chao Chou answered, '*Wu!*' [meaning 'No!']." This dialogue is called a "koan," but the Zen student who is working on this koan should not think of *both* the question and the answer. Instead he should put all his mind into the single word "*Wu.*"<sup>3</sup> *This one word, "Wu,"<sup>4</sup> is called the Hua Tou.* There are also other interpretations for the meaning of *Hua Tou*, but the above sufficiently serves our present purpose.

How is the koan exercise practiced? When working at it, what should be avoided and what adhered to, what experiences will one have, and what will one accomplish thereby? The answers will be found in the Zen Masters' discourses and autobiographies which follow. They have been carefully selected from many primary Zen sources.

## DISCOURSES OF FOUR ZEN MASTERS

### *1. Discourses of Master Hsu Yun*

Master Hsu Yun is the most celebrated living Zen teacher in China. He is, at this writing, a hundred and nineteen years old, but still healthy in body and alert in mind. He has given instruction to thousands of disciples and, in the past few decades, has established a great many monasteries in different parts of China. His life story is full of interesting episodes, and he is regarded as the most exemplary authority on Zen in modern China. The following sermons were given by him some years ago, when he led a number of Zen disciples



in the practice of the customary "Seven Days' Meditation" <sup>4</sup> at the Jade Buddha Monastery in Shanghai.

THE FIRST DAY OF THE FIRST  
PERIOD, JANUARY 9TH, 7 P.M.:<sup>5</sup>

After making obeisance to His Reverence Hsu Yun, the supervising monks invited him to come to the Meditation Hall of the monastery. He then stood in the center of the hall, while the supervisors, one of whom held a [warning] slapping board, stood in two rows on each side of the Master. The disciples in attendance, who had vowed to join this Seven Days' Meditation, and who had come from all parts of the country, stood about him in a large circle. Then the Revered Master raised his own slapping board and addressed the assembled company as follows: "This is the new month of the New Year, and now, fortunately, we can all join this Seven Days' Meditation practice. This is the place to learn the teaching of Not-Doing (*Wu Wei*). 'Not-Doing' means that there is absolutely nothing to be done or to be learned. Alas! Whatever I can say about 'nothingness' will miss the point. Oh, friends and disciples, if you do not attach yourselves to the Ten Thousand Things with your minds, you will find that the life-spark will emanate from *everything*.

"Today is the first day of our Meditation. Friends, what do you say? Ah-h-h!"

Then after a long silence, the Master cried: "Go!" Immediately all the disciples, responding to his call, followed him, running in a large circle. After they had run for a number of rounds a supervising monk made the "stopping signal" by suddenly whacking the board on a table, making a loud slapping noise. Instantly all the runners stopped and stood still. After a pause they all sat down on their seats in the cross-legged posture. Then

the entire hall became deadly quiet; not the slightest sound could be heard, as though they were in some deep mountain fastness. This silent meditation lasted for more than an hour. Then everyone rose from his seat and the circling exercise started again. After running a few more rounds, all suddenly stopped once more when they heard the slapping board make the signal.

Then the Master addressed the company as follows: "The Head Monk in this monastery is very kind and compassionate. It was through his sincere efforts that this Seven Days' Meditation was made possible. All the elders in the Order, and you lay-patrons as well, are diligent and inspired in the work of Tao. I was requested by all of you to lead the group in this Seven Days' Meditation. I feel greatly honored and inspired on this wonderful occasion. But I have not been too well of late; therefore I cannot talk very long. Our Lord Buddha preached the Dharma for more than forty years, sometimes preaching explicitly, sometimes implicitly. His teachings are all recorded and expounded in the Three Great Canons. So what is the use of my making more talk? The most I can do, and the best, is to repeat the words of our Lord Buddha and the Patriarchs. In any case, we should know that the teaching of Zen is transmitted outside the regular Buddhist doctrine. This is illustrated most effectively in the first Zen koan. When Buddha held the flower in his hand and showed it to his disciples, no one in the assembly understood his purport except Mahakasyapa, who smiled to indicate that he understood what Buddha meant. The Buddha then said, 'I have a treasure of the righteous Dharma, and the marvelous Mind of *Nirvana*—the true form without any form. I now impart it to you.' Therefore you should understand that Zen is a teaching transmitted outside the regular channels of Buddhist doctrine, without resorting to many words or explanations. Zen is the high-



est and most direct teaching leading to instantaneous Enlightenment, providing one is capable of grasping it at once. Some people have mistakenly thought that the twenty odd Ch'ans (*Dhyanas*) mentioned in the *Great Perfect Wisdom Sutra* comprise the whole of Ch'an [Zen]. This is utterly wrong. These *Dhyanas* are not the supreme ones. The work of our 'Ch'an' has no gradual processes or successive stages. This Ch'an is the supreme Ch'an of seeing one's Buddha-nature instantly. But if this is so, why should one bother to practice the so-called Seven Days' Meditation? [We must understand that] people's capacity to practice the Dharma is deteriorating all the time. Nowadays people have too many distracting thoughts in their minds. Therefore the Patriarchs have designed special methods and techniques, such as the Seven Days' Meditation Practice, the koan exercises, the circle-running exercise, and so forth, to cope with this condition and to help persons of lesser capacity. From the time of Mahakasyapa until now Zen has spanned some sixty to seventy generations. During the periods of Tang and Sung Zen spread to every place under Heaven. How great and how glorious was Zen in those days! Alas! Compared to them, to what a pitiable state has Zen fallen now! Only Chin Shan [The Golden Mountain] Monastery, Kao Ming [High Heaven] Monastery, Pao Kuang [The Precious Light] Monastery, and several others still keep up the tradition of Zen. Therefore not many outstanding figures can be found in the Zen schools today.

"Once the Seventh Patriarch, Shen Hui, asked the Sixth Patriarch, Hui Neng, 'Through what practice should one work that one may not fall into a "category"?' The Sixth Patriarch replied, 'What have you been doing?' Shen Hui answered, 'I do not even practice the Holy Truth!' 'In that case, to what category do you belong?' 'Even the Holy Truth does not exist, so

how can there be any category?' Hearing this answer, the Sixth Patriarch was impressed by Shen Hui's understanding.

"Now you and I, not being as highly endowed as the Patriarchs, are obliged to devise methods such as the *Hua Tou* practice, which teach us to work on a specifically chosen koan problem crystallized into a single sentence or *Hua Tou*. After the Sung Dynasty the Pure Land School became increasingly popular, and reciting the name of Buddha Amida became a widespread practice among the Buddhists. Under these circumstances, the great Zen Masters urged people to work on the *Hua Tou* of 'Who is the one who recites the name of Buddha?' This *Hua Tou* then became, and still remains, the most popular of all. But there are still many people who do not understand how to practice it. Some are foolish enough to recite repeatedly the sentence itself! This *Hua Tou* practice is not a matter of reciting the sentence or concentrating on it. It is to *tsen* the very nature of the sentence. *Tsen* means to look into penetratingly and to observe. In the meditation hall of any monastery we usually find the following admonition posted on the walls: 'Observe and look into your *Hua Tou*.' Here, 'to observe' means to look at in reverse, that is, to look backward; and 'look into' means to put your mind penetratingly *into* the *Hua Tou*. Our minds are used to going *outside* and sensing the things in the outer world. *Tsen* is to reverse this habit and to look *inside*. 'Who is the one who recites the name of Buddha?' is the *hua*, the sentence. But before the thought of this sentence ever arises, we have the *tou* (the end). To *tsen* this *Hua Tou* is to look into the very idea of 'Who?', to penetrate into the state before the thought ever arises, and to see what this state looks like. It is to observe from whence the very thought of 'Who' comes, to see what



it looks like, and subtly and very gently to penetrate into it.

"During your circle-running exercise you should hold your neck straight so that it touches the back of your collar, and follow the person ahead of you closely. Keep your mind calm and smooth. Do not turn your head to look around, but to concentrate your mind on the *Hua Tou*. When you sit in meditation do not lift your chest too far upward by artificially swelling it. In breathing, do not pull the air up, nor press it down. Let your breath rise and fall in its natural rhythm. Collect all your six senses and put aside everything that may be in your mind. Think of nothing, but observe your *Hua Tou*. Never forget your *Hua Tou*. Your mind should never be rough or forceful, otherwise it will keep wandering, and can never calm down; but neither should you allow your mind to become dull and slothful, for then you will become drowsy, and as a consequence you will fall into the snare of the 'dead-void.' If you can always adhere to your *Hua Tou*, you will naturally and easily master the work. Thus, all your habitual thoughts will automatically be subdued. It is not an easy job for beginners to work well on the *Hua Tou*, but you should never become afraid or discouraged; neither should you cling to any thought of attaining Enlightenment, because you are right now practicing the Seven Days' Meditation, whose very purpose is to produce Enlightenment. Therefore any additional thought of attaining Enlightenment is as unnecessary and as foolish as to think of adding a head to the one you already have! You should not worry about it if at first you cannot work well on the *Hua Tou*; what you should do is just to keep remembering and observing it continuously. If any distracting thoughts arise, do not follow them up, but just recognize them for what they are. The proverb says well:

Do not worry about the arising of distracting thoughts,  
But beware if your recognition of them  
Arises too late!

"In the beginning everyone feels the distraction of continuously arising errant thoughts, and cannot remember the *Hua Tou* very well; but gradually, as time goes on, you will learn to take up the *Hua Tou* more easily. When that time comes you can take it up with ease and it will not escape you once during the entire hour. Then you will find the work is not difficult at all. I have talked a lot of nonsense today! Now all of you had better go and work hard on your *Hua Tou*."

#### THE SECOND DAY OF THE FIRST PERIOD, JANUARY 10TH:

The Master again addressed those in attendance, as follows: "The Seven Days' Meditation is the best way to attain Enlightenment within a definite and predetermined period. In the old days, when people were better endowed, many Zen Buddhists did not pay special attention to this method. But during the Sung Dynasty it began to gain popularity. Due especially to its promotion by Emperor Yung Cheng during the Ching Dynasty, the method became widespread throughout China. Emperor Yung Cheng of the Ching Dynasty was a very advanced Zen Buddhist, and had great respect and admiration for the teaching of Zen. In his royal palace the Seven Days' Meditation was carried on frequently. Under his instruction some ten persons attained Enlightenment. For example, the Tien Hui Zen Master of the High Heaven Monastery at Yang Chow became enlightened under his teachings. This Emperor reformed the systems and rules of Zen monasteries, and also the Zen practices. Through him Zen was greatly revitalized, and



many outstanding Masters flourished during his time.

"Now we are working on Ch'an. What is Ch'an? It is called, in Sanskrit, *Dhyana*—the practice of deep concentration or contemplation. There are many different kinds of it, such as Hinayana and Mahayana Ch'an, Ch'an with Form and without Form, etc. But the Ch'an of the Ch'an School [of China] is the highest, the supreme Ch'an, different from all the others. This hall in which we are now sitting is called the Hall of *Prajna*, or the Arena of Enlightenment. It is here that you should penetrate into the 'sensation of doubt,' and cut off the root of life. In this hall only the teaching of Nothingness or the Dharma of Non-doing is studied. Because [in reality] there is nothing to be done and nothing to be gained, anything that is subject to action or doing is bound to have 'arising' and 'extinction' connected with it. Anything that is obtainable must also be losable. All other Dharma practices, such as prostrations, penitence, reciting *sutras*, etc., are all *doing* something; they are all, therefore, relative means and expedient teachings. Zen is to teach you to take up [the thing] right at this very moment without using any words at all. A monk asked Nan Chuan, 'What is Tao?' Nan Chuan answered, 'The ordinary mind is Tao.' Look! do you all understand this? In reality we have always been in the Tao—eating, walking, dressing, etc. No activity in which we are engaged can be separated from Tao. Our fault is that we cling to things all the time; thus we cannot realize that the self-mind is Buddha. A scholar, Ta Mei, asked Ma Tsu, 'What is Buddha?' Ma Tsu replied, 'The mind is Buddha.' As soon as he heard the answer Ta Mei became enlightened. He then bowed down to Ma Tsu, thanked him, and left. Later, Ta Mei resided in a hermitage somewhere in Che Chiang Province and had many disciples. His fame came to the ears of Ma Tsu. In order to make sure of the authenticity of his under-

standing, Ma Tsu sent a monk to his hermitage to investigate him. This monk was given the koan of 'Not Mind and Not Buddha' with which to test Ta Mei. When the monk arrived at the hermitage, Ta Mei asked him, 'Where did you, Revered Monk, come from?'

"I came from the great Master Ma."

"What kind of Buddhism is he teaching now?"

"Oh, of late his Buddhism has been completely changed!"

"How did it change?"

"Formerly the great Master Ma always said, 'The very mind is Buddha Itself,' but now he says it is neither the mind nor the Buddha."

"Ta Mei bit his lip and said, 'This old scoundrel is just trying to confuse people. Let him have [his] "neither the mind nor the Buddha." I still say the mind is Buddha!'

"From this story we know how the Zenists in the old days had their decisive and unshakable understandings, and how simply and directly they came to their Realization!

"Now you and I are very, very inferiorly endowed persons. Errant thoughts fill our minds to the brim. In their desperation, the great Patriarchs designed this *Hua Tou* practice for us, not because the *Hua Tou* is so wonderful in itself, but simply because the Patriarchs had no other way to help us except by devising such an expedient method.

"Master Kao Feng said, 'When one practices Zen he should do so as though he were throwing a piece of tile into a deep pond; it sinks and sinks until it reaches the very bottom.' In other words, in our *Tsen-Zen* exercise we should look into the very bottom of the *Hua Tou* until we completely break through it. Master Kao Feng went further, and made a vow: 'If anyone takes up one *Hua Tou* without a second thought arising in seven days,



and does not attain Enlightenment, I shall fall forever to the bottom of the Tongue-cutting Hell!’

“When beginners first practice Zen, they always have difficulty in subduing their ever-flowing errant thoughts, and suffer the miseries of pains in their legs. They do not know how to work these matters out. The important thing is to stick to your *Hua Tou* at all times—when walking, lying, or standing—from morning to night observing the *Hua Tou* vividly and clearly, until it appears in your mind like the autumn moon reflected limpidly in quiet water. If you practice this way, you can be assured of reaching the state of Enlightenment. In meditation, if you feel sleepy, you may open your eyes widely and straighten your back; you will then feel fresher and more alert than before.

“When working on the *Hua Tou*, you should be neither too subtle nor too loose. If you are too subtle you may feel very serene and comfortable, but you are apt to lose the *Hua Tou*. The consequence will then be that you will fall into the ‘dead emptiness.’ Right in the state of serenity, if you do *not* lose the *Hua Tou*, you may then be able to progress further than the top of the hundred-foot pole you have already ascended. If you are too loose, too many errant thoughts will attack you. You will then find it difficult to subdue them. In short, the Zen practitioner should be well adjusted, neither too tight nor too loose; in the looseness there should be tightness, and in the tightness there should be looseness. Practicing in such a manner, one may then gain improvement, and merge stillness and motion into one whole.

“I remember in the old days when I practiced the circle-running exercise in Golden Mountain Monastery and other places, the supervising monks made us run like flying birds! Oh, we monks really could run! But when the warning board suddenly sounded its stop-

signal, everybody stopped and stood still like so many dead poles! Now think! Under these circumstances, how could any drowsiness or distracting thoughts possibly arise?

"When you are meditating in the sitting posture, you should never bring the *Hua Tou* up too high; if you bring it up too much, you will get a headache. Nor should you place the *Hua Tou* in your chest; if you do, you will feel uncomfortable and suffer a pain there. Nor should you press the *Hua Tou* down too low; if you do, you will have trouble with your stomach and see delusive visions. What you should do is to watch the word 'Who,' softly and gently, with a smooth mind and calm, steady breath, like that of a hen as she hatches her egg or a cat when she watches a mouse. If you can do this well, you will find that one of these days your liferoot will suddenly and abruptly break off!"

#### THE FOURTH DAY OF THE FIRST PERIOD, JANUARY 12TH:

"Now three days of the seven have already passed. I am glad you are all working so hard. Some of you have brought me some poems and stanzas you have composed and asked me to comment on them. Some of you say that you saw Voidness and light, and so on. Well, these are not bad things; but judging from them, I am sure that you must have forgotten all that I told you in the first two days. Last night I told you that to practice Tao is nothing more than to follow and to recognize the Way. What is the Way? To look into the *Hua Tou* which is like a royal sword. With it you kill the Buddha when Buddha comes, with it you slaughter the devil when the devil comes. Under this sword not a single idea is allowed to remain, not a solitary dharma is permitted to exist. How is it possible then to have so much distracted



thought that you compose poems and stanzas, and see visions of light and Void? If you keep on doing this sort of thing, you will, in time, completely forget your *Hua Tou*. Now remember, to work on the *Hua Tou* is to look into it continuously without a single moment of interruption. Like the river ever flowing on, the mind should always be lucid and aware. All Sangsaric and Nirvanic ideas and conceptions should be wiped out! As the great Zen Master, Huang Po, said:

To practice the Tao  
Is like defending the forbidden Royal Palace under  
invasion.  
Guard it closely with your life,  
And fight for it with all your might!  
Behold, if the freezing cold  
Has not yet penetrated to the core of your bones,  
How can it be possible for you  
To smell the fresh fragrance of the blooming plum  
blossom?

"We sentient beings all have the Fundamental Consciousness, or the so-called Eighth Consciousness, which is comparable to the king of all consciousnesses. This king is surrounded by the Seventh, the Sixth, and all the other five consciousnesses—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching. These are the five outer thieves. The Sixth Consciousness is the mind, the inner thief. The Seventh clings to the cognizant faculty of the Chief, or Eighth, Consciousness as its own great ego. Under its leadership the Sixth and the other five consciousnesses attach themselves to colors, sounds, touches, etc.; and thus the Chief Consciousness is entwined tightly by them and has no chance to turn its head around. The *Hua Tou* we are working on now is like a sharp sword with which we may slaughter all these harassing thieves and thus transform the Eighth Consciousness into the Wis-

dom of the Great Mirror, the Seventh Consciousness into the Wisdom of Equality, the Sixth into the Wisdom of Observation, and the five senses into the Wisdom of Performance. But the most important thing is to transform the Sixth and the Seventh Consciousnesses first, because it is these two faculties that take the lead and impose their influence on the rest. Their function is to distinguish, to differentiate, to conceptualize, and to fabricate. Now the poems and stanzas that you have composed, and the light and the Void, etc., that you have perceived, were all the fabrications of these two consciousnesses. You should forget all these things, and stick to your *Hua Tou*. Also you should know that there is another pitfall into which a Zen practitioner may easily fall, that is to meditate idly and make his mind deadly dull in utter torpidity. This is the worst error of all. Now let me tell you a koan:

"The Master who first established the Shih Tan Monastery, studied Zen under many different Masters, traveling from one place to another. He was a very industrious person, working on his Zen all the time. One night he stayed in an inn and heard a girl, who was a bean cake maker, singing the following song in an adjacent room while she was making bean cakes:

Oh, Chang is the bean cake,  
 And Lee is also the bean cake.<sup>6</sup>  
 At night when you lay your head down upon your pillow,  
 A thousand thoughts may arise in your mind;  
 But when you awake in the morning,  
 You still continue to make the bean cakes.

"The Zen Master was absorbed in meditation when the girl sang this song. Upon hearing it, he suddenly awoke to Realization. From this story we know that Zen practice need not necessarily be carried out in the temples or meditation halls. Anywhere and everywhere one



can reach Enlightenment if he can concentrate his mind on the work without being sidetracked by other things."

THE LAST DAY OF THE  
SECOND PERIOD, JANUARY 23:

The Master addressed the attendant disciples as follows: "This is the last day of our two periods of Seven Days' Meditation. I congratulate you all on being able to complete the task. Today I shall investigate your Zen work and see whether you have gained any realization or improvement. You should stand up and, in plain and honest words, announce your understandings and experiences to all. Now, anyone who has become Enlightened, please stand up and say something!"

A long time passed, and no one stood up. The Master said nothing, and walked out of the Zen Hall.

2. *Discourses of*  
*Master Tsung Kao*

TO LEE HSIEN CHEN:

. . . Buddha says, "If one wants to know the Realm of Buddha, he should purify his own mind like the void space." . . . You must know that this Realm is not gained through any exalted religious practice. What one should do is to cleanse the defilements of passion and delusion that have lain hidden in the roots of his own mind from the very no-beginning-time. His mind should be vast and expansive like space itself, far away from mere psychic notions. All wild and distracting thoughts are illusory, unreal, and void-like. Practicing in this manner, the wonder of the effortless mind will then

naturally and spontaneously react to all conditions without any obstacle.

### TO HUANG PO CHENG:

The so-called No-mind [Chinese: *Wu hsin*] is not like clay, wood, or stone, that is, utterly devoid of consciousness; nor does the term imply that the mind stands still without any reaction when it contacts objects or circumstances in the world. It does not adhere to anything, but is natural and spontaneous at all times and under all circumstances. There is nothing impure within it; neither does it remain in a state of impurity. When one observes his body and mind, he sees them as magic shadows or as a dream. Nor does he abide in this magic and dreamlike state. . . . When he reaches this point, then he can be considered as having arrived at the true state of No-mind.

### TO HSU TUN LI:

Conceptualization is a deadly hindrance to the Zen yogis, more injurious than poisonous snakes or fierce beasts. . . .<sup>7</sup> Brilliant and intellectual persons always abide in the cave of conceptualization; they can never get away from it in all their activities. As months and years pass they become more deeply engulfed in it. Unknowingly the mind and conceptualization gradually become of a piece. Even if one wants to get away from it, he finds it is impossible. Therefore, I say, poisonous snakes and beasts are avoidable, but there is no way to escape from mental conceptualization. Intellectuals and noble gentlemen are apt to search for the nongraspable Dharma with a "grasping mind." What is this "grasping mind"? The grasping mind is the very one that is capable of thinking and calculating—the one



that is intelligent and brilliant. What is the nongraspable Dharma? The nongraspable Dharma is that which cannot be conceived, measured, or comprehended intellectually. . . . Yung Chia says, "The real nature of blindness is the real nature of Buddha. This illusory [physical] body is the *Dharmakaya* itself. When one realizes the *Dharmakaya*, [he sees] that nothing exists. This is called 'The Original Primeval Buddhahood.'"

With this understanding, if one abruptly throws his mind into the abyss where mind and thought cannot reach, he will then behold the absolute, void *Dharmakaya*. This is where one emancipates oneself from *Sangsara*. . . .

People have always been abiding in the cave of thought and intellection. As soon as they hear me say "Get rid of thinking," they are dazed and lost and do not know where to go. They should know that right at the moment when this very feeling of loss and stupefaction arises is the best time for them to attain realization [literally, for them to release their body and life].

### IN ANSWER TO LU SHUN YUAN:

There is no definite standard by which one can measure the forces of Dharma and of Karma. The critical point is to see whether one can be aware of his mind-essence in all activities at all times. Here one must know that both the force of Karma and the force of Dharma are illusory. If a man insists on ridding himself of Karma and taking up Dharma, I would say that this man does not understand Buddhism. If one can really destroy Karma, he will find that the Dharma is also unreal. Ordinary people are small in courage and narrow in perspective; they always infer that *this* practice is easy, and that *that* one is difficult. They do not know that the discriminating mind which deems things to be easy or

difficult, which attaches itself to things or detaches itself from them, is itself the very mind that drags us down into *Sangsara*. If this mind is not uprooted, no liberation is possible.

### TO TSENG TIEN YU:

From your letter I know that you can work on Zen during all daily activities and official business without being interrupted or entangled by them. Even though you may be submerged in a torrent of worldly affairs, you are always able to keep your mindfulness alert. This is indeed remarkable. I am very pleased with your vigorous effort and the increasing strength of your aspiration to Tao. However, you must realize that the tumult of *Sangsara* is like a great fireball; there is no ending to it. Therefore, right at the moment of engaging in any turbulent activity, you must not forget the straw seats and the bamboo chairs.<sup>8</sup> The superior work you have done so industriously in quietness should be applied when you are submerged in the tumult of your daily life. If you find it difficult to do so, it is most likely that you have not gained very much from the work in quietude. If you are convinced that meditating in quietude is better than meditating in activity, you are then [falling into the trap] of searching for reality through destroying manifestations, or of departing from causation to pursue *Nirvana*. The very moment when you are craving quiet and abhorring turbulence is the best time to put all your strength into the Work. Suddenly the realization which you have searched so hard for in your quiet meditations will break upon you right in the midst of the turbulence. Oh, this power, gained from breaking-through, is thousands and millions of times greater than that generated by quiet meditation on your straw seat and bamboo chair!



## TO HUANG PO CHENG:

It is easy for Zen yogis to empty the [outer] things, but it is difficult for them to empty their [inner] minds. If one can empty only the things and not the mind, this proves that his mind is still under the subjugation of the things. If one can empty his mind, the things will be emptied automatically. If one thinks he has emptied his mind, but then raises the second thought of emptying the things, this proves clearly that his mind has never been really emptied; he is still under the subjugation of outer things. If this mind itself is emptied, what things could possibly exist outside of it?

Only after one has utterly and completely broken through is he qualified to say "Passion-desire in Enlightenment and blindness is the Great Wisdom."

The originally vast, serene, and marvelous mind is all-pure and illuminatingly all-inclusive. Nothing can hinder it; it is free as the firmament. Even the name "Buddha" cannot encompass it. How is it then possible to find passion-desires or erroneous views in it, in opposition to the idea of "Buddha"?

This is like the sun shining in the blue sky—clear and bright, unmovable and immutable, neither increasing nor decreasing. In all daily activities it illuminates all places and shines out from all things. *If you want to grasp it, it runs away from you; but if you cast it away, it continues to exist there all the time.*

## TO HSU TUN LI:

When working on Zen, one should dig into it with all his mind and heart. Whether you are happy or angry, in high or lowly surroundings, drinking tea or eating dinner, at home with your wife and children, meeting with guests, on duty in the office, attending a party or a

wedding celebration, [or active in any other way], you should always be alert and mindful of the Work, because all of these occasions are first-class opportunities for self-awakening. Formerly the High Commissioner, Lee Wen Hoo, gained thorough Enlightenment while he was holding this high position in the government. Young Wen Kung gained his Zen awakening while he was working in the Royal Institute of Study. Chang Wu Yuen gained his while he held the office of the Commissioner of Transport in Chiang Hsi Province. These three great laymen have indeed set for us an example of the realization of Truth without renunciation of the world. Did *they* struggle at all to shun their wives, resign from their offices and positions, gnaw the roots of vegetables, practice ascetism and frugality, avoid disturbance, and seek quiet [and seclusion] to gain their enlightenment?

[The difference between the way that a layman and a monk must work on Zen is that] the monk strives to break through from the outside to the inside, while the layman must break through from the inside to the outside. Trying to break through from the outside requires little, but from the inside, great power. Thus the layman requires much more power to get the Work done because of the unfavorable conditions under which he must work . . . . The great power generated from this difficult struggle enables him to make a much more thorough and mighty *turnabout* than the monk; the monk, on the other hand, can only make a smaller turn because, working under far more favorable conditions, he gains less power [in the process].

### TO HSU SHOU YUAN:

To measure the self-mind with intellection and conceptualization is as futile as dreaming. When the consciousness, wholly liberated in tranquility and having no thought whatsoever, moves on, it is called "right



realization." When one has attained this correct realization, one is then able to become tranquilly natural at all times and in all activities—while walking or sitting, standing or sleeping, talking or remaining silent. One will never be confused under any circumstance. Thought and thoughtlessness both become pure.

Alas! I explain [the matter] to you in all these words simply because I am helpless! If I say in its literal sense that there is something to work with, I then betray you!

### IN ANSWER TO LU LUNG LI:

Penetrate to the bottom of your mind and ask, "Where does this very thought of craving for wealth and glory come from? Where will the thinker go afterwards?" You will find that you cannot answer either of these two questions. Then you will feel perplexed. That is the moment to look at the *Hua Tou*, "Dry dung!" Do not think of anything else. Just continue to hold to this *Hua Tou*. . . . Then suddenly you will lose all your mental resources and awake.

The worst thing is to quote the scriptures and give explanations or elaborations to prove your "understanding." No matter how well you may put things together, you are but trying to find a living being among ghosts! If one cannot break up the "doubt-sensation," he is bound by life and death; if he can break it up, his *Sangsaric* mind will come to its end. If the *Sangsaric* mind is exhausted, the ideas of Buddha and Dharma will also come to an end. Then, since even the ideas of Buddha and Dharma are no more, from whence could arise the ideas of passion-desires and sentient beings?

### TO YUNG MAO SHIH:

If you have made up your mind to practice Zen, the first and most important thing is: *Do not hurry!* If you

hurry, you will only be delayed. Nor should you be too lax, for then you will become lazy. The work should be carried out as a musician adjusts the strings of his harp—neither too tightly nor too loosely.

What you should do is look at that which understands and makes decisions and judgments. Just look at it all the time in your daily round. With great determination in your heart, try to find out from whence all these mental activities come. *By looking at it here and there, now and then, the things with which you are familiar and are in the habit of doing gradually become unfamiliar; and the things with which you are not familiar [Zen Work] gradually become familiar. When you find your Work coming easily, you are doing very well in it. And by the same token, whenever the Work is being done well, you will feel that it is coming easily for you. A critical stage is thus reached.*

### TO TSENG TIEN YU:

The one who distinguishes, judges, and makes decisions is sentient consciousness. This is the one who forever wanders in *Sangsara*. Not being aware that this sentient consciousness is a dangerous pitfall, many Zen students nowadays cling to it and deem it to be the Tao. They rise and fall like [a piece of driftwood] in the sea. But if one can abruptly put everything down, stripped of all thought and deliberations, suddenly he feels as if he had stumbled over a stone and stepped upon his own nose. Instantaneously he realizes that this sentient consciousness is the true, void, marvelous Wisdom itself. No other wisdom than this can be obtained. . . . This is like a man, in his confusion, mistakenly regarding the east as the west. But when he awakens, he realizes that the "west" is the east. There is no other east to be found. This true, void, marvelous Wisdom lives on



eternally like space. Have you ever seen anything that can impede space? Though it is not impeded by anything, neither does it hinder anything from moving on in its embrace.

TO HSIEH KUO JAN:

If one can instantaneously realize the truth of non-existence without departing from lust, hate, and ignorance, he can grasp the weapons of the Demon King and use them in an opposite way. He can then turn these evil companions into angels protecting the Dharma. This is not done in an artificial or compulsory way. This is the nature of the Dharma itself.

TO HSIUNG HSU YA:

If in all your daily activities and contacts you can keep your awareness or do away with that which is "unaware," gradually as the days and months go by your mind will naturally become smoothed out into one continuous, whole piece. What exactly do I mean by "contacts"? I mean that when you are angry or happy, attending to your official business, entertaining your guests, sitting with your wife and children, thinking of good or evil things—all these occasions are good opportunities to bring forth the "sudden eruption." This is of the utmost importance; bear it in your mind.

TO HSIEH KUO JAN:

The Elders in the past said, "Just put your whole mind to it and work hard. The Dharma will never let you down."

## To CHEN CHI JEN:

When you are involved in turmoils and excitement which you have no way of avoiding or eschewing, you should know that this is the very best time to work on Zen. If, instead, you make an effort to suppress or correct your thoughts, you are getting far away from Zen. The worst thing a student can do is to attempt to correct or suppress his thoughts during inescapable circumstances. Masters in ancient times have said,

No distinguishment whatsoever arises—  
Only the void-illumination  
Reflects all manifestations within oneself.

Bear this in mind, bear this in mind!

If you use one iota of strength to make the slightest effort to attain Enlightenment, you will never get it. If you make such an effort, you are trying to grasp space with your hands, which is useless and a waste of your time!

### 3. Discourses of Master Po Shan

When working on Zen, the important thing is to generate the *I chin*<sup>9</sup> [doubt-sensation]. What is this doubt-sensation? For instance: Where did I come from before my birth, and where shall I go after my death? Since one does not know the answer to either question, a strong feeling of "doubt" arises in the mind. Stick this "doubt-mass" onto your forehead [and keep it there] all the time until you can neither drive it away nor put it down, even if you want to. Then suddenly you will discover that the doubt-mass has been crushed, that you have broken it into pieces. The Masters of old said:



The greater the doubt, the greater the awakening;  
The smaller the doubt, the smaller the awakening.  
No doubt, no awakening.

When working on Zen, the worst thing is to become attached to quietness, because this will unknowingly cause you to be engrossed in dead stillness. Then you will develop an inordinate fondness for quietness and at the same time an aversion for activity of any kind. Once those who have lived amidst the noise and restlessness of worldly affairs experience the joy of quietness, they become captivated by its honey-sweet taste, craving it like an exhausted traveler who seeks a peaceful den in which to slumber. How can people with such an attitude retain their awareness?

When working on Zen, one does not see the sky when he lifts his head, nor the earth when he lowers it. To him a mountain is not a mountain and water is not water. While walking or sitting he is not aware of doing so. Though among a hundred thousand people, he sees no one. Without and within his body and mind nothing exists but the burden of his doubt-sensation. This feeling can be described as "turning the whole world into a muddy vortex."

A Zen yogi should resolutely vow that he will never stop working until this doubt-mass is broken up. This is a most crucial point.

What does this "turning the whole world into a muddy vortex" mean? It refers to the great Truth, which from the very no-beginning-time has existed latent and idle—it has never been brought forth. Therefore a Zen yogi should bestir himself to make the heavens spin and the earth and its waters roll; he will benefit greatly from the rolling surges and tossing waves.

When working on Zen, one should not worry about

not being able to revive after death;<sup>10</sup> what should worry him is whether he can die out from the state of life! If one can really wrap himself up tightly in *I chin*, the realm of movement will be vanquished naturally without his making any specific effort to vanquish it, and one's distracted thoughts will be purified spontaneously without effort to purify them. In a wholly natural way, one will feel his six senses become spacious and vacuous. [When one reaches this state], he will awaken to a mere touch and respond to the slightest call. Why then should one worry about not being able to revive?

When working on Zen, one should concentrate on one koan only, and not try to understand or explain them all. Even if one were able to do so, this would be merely intellectual understanding and not true realization. The *Lotus Sutra* says: "This Dharma is not comprehended through thinking and intellection." *The Total Enlightenment Sutra* [Yuan Chiao Chin] declares: "To perceive the Realm of Enlightenment of the Tathagata with the thinking mind is like attempting to burn Mount Sumeru with the light of a firefly; never will one succeed."

When working on Zen, he who works with absorption will feel as if he had lifted a thousand-pound load; and even if he wants to put it down, he cannot do so.

In ancient times people could enter into *Dhyana* while tilling the land, picking peaches, or engaging in any business. It was never a matter of sitting idly for prolonged periods, engaged in forcefully suppressing one's thoughts. Does *Dhyana* mean stopping one's thoughts? If so, this is a debased *Dhyana*, not the *Dhyana* of Zen.

When working on Zen, the most harmful thing is to



rationalize, conceptualize, or intellectualize the Tao with one's mind. If one does so, he will never reach Tao.

When working on Zen, one knows not whether he is walking or sitting. Nothing is present to his mind but the *Hua Tou*. Before breaking through the doubt-mass, he loses all sensation of his body or mind, let alone of such states as walking or sitting.

When working on Zen, one should not just await the coming of Enlightenment with an expectant mind. This is like a man on a journey who sits idly by the road and expects his home to come to him. He will never arrive home this way. To get there he must walk home. Likewise, when working on Zen, one never reaches Enlightenment merely by waiting for it. He must press forward with all his mind to get this Enlightenment. Attainment of the great Enlightenment is like the sudden blossoming of the lotus flower or the sudden awakening of the dreamer. One cannot by waiting awaken from a dream, but he does so automatically when the time for sleep is over. Flowers cannot bloom by waiting, but blossom of themselves when the time has come. Likewise Enlightenment is not so attained, but comes on its own when conditions are ripe. In other words, one should exert all his strength to penetrate into the *Hua Tou*, pressing his mind to the utmost in order to achieve realization. Do not misunderstand what I have said and just wait for awakening to come. In the moment of awakening, the clouds vanish and the clear sky shines vast and empty; nothing can obscure it. In this moment heaven spins and the earth somersaults. An entirely different realm appears.

The Masters of old said: "Tao, like the great Void, is all-inclusive. It lacks nothing and nothing remains in it." If one has really attained the state of flexible hol-

lowness,<sup>11</sup> he sees no world without and no body or mind within. Only then can he be considered as having drawn near the entrance [of Tao].

When working on Zen, one should know these four important points: To work on it with absolute detachment and complete freedom in a painstaking, direct, continuous, and flexible-hollow way.

Without directness, exertion becomes completely wasted; and without exertion, directness is useless because it alone can never bring one to the entrance [of Tao]. Once the entrance is reached however, one should maintain an uninterrupted continuity in order to attain a state conforming with Enlightenment. Once this state is achieved, one should strive to be flexible-hollow. Only then can one reach the state of wonder.<sup>12</sup>

In days of old people often drew circles of lime [on the ground] to signify determination that, until they realized the ultimate Truth, they would never go outside of the circle. Nowadays people frivolously draw circles in wanton folly, pretending they possess a free and lively spirit. How laughable this is!

If, during your work, you experience comfort or lightness, or come to some understanding or discovery, you must not assume that these things constitute true "realization." Some time ago, I, Po Shan, worked on the Ferry Monk's koan, "Leaving no Trace." One day, while reading the book of *The Transmission of the Lamp*, I came upon the story in which Chao Chou told a monk, "You have to meet someone three thousand miles away to get it [the Tao]." Suddenly I felt as if I had dropped the thousand-pound burden and believed that I had attained the great "realization." But when I met Master Pao Fang I soon saw how ignorant I was, and I became very ashamed of myself. Thus you should know that even after one has attained *Wu* (*Satori*) and feels safe and



comfortable, he still cannot consider the work done until he has consulted a great teacher.

Zen-work does not consist in merely reciting a koan. What is the use of repeating a sentence again and again? The primary thing is to arouse the "doubt-sensation," no matter what koan you are working on.

When working on Zen, it is important not to lose the right thought. This is the thought of *tсен*, meaning "to bore into."<sup>18</sup> If one loses the thought of *tсен*, he has no alternative but to go astray. Some Zen yogis absorb themselves in quiet meditation and cling to the feeling of quietness and limpidity. They regard this experience of absolute purity, devoid of a speck of dust, as Buddhism. But this is just what I mean by losing the right thought and straying into lucid serenity. Some Zen yogis regard the consciousness-soul that reads, talks, sits, and moves as the prime concern of Buddhism. This, also, is going astray. Some who suppress distracted thought and stop its arising consider *this* to be Buddhism. They, however, are going astray by using delusory thought to suppress delusory thought. It is like trying to press down the grass with a rock or to peel the leaves of a plantain, one after another—there is no end. Some visualize the body-mind as space, or bring the arising thoughts to a complete stop like a standing wall, but this, also, is going astray.

When working on Zen, to merely arouse the "doubt-sensation" is not enough. One must break right through it. If he cannot seem to do so, he must put forth all his strength, strain every nerve, and keep on trying.

Chao Chou said, "For the past thirty years I have never diverted my mind except when eating or dressing." He also said, "If you put your mind on the principle, sit and look into it for twenty to thirty years, and

if you still do not understand, come and chop off my head!"

Yun Men said, "There are two kinds of sickness that prevent the 'light' ' from being penetratingly free. First, the yogi feels that it does not illuminate at all places and times, and that something continues to appear before him. Second, although he may have penetrated through the voidness of all Dharmas, yet, hazily and faintly, there still seems to be something existing. This, also, is a sign that the light is not penetratingly free.

"There are, likewise, two illnesses of the *Dharmakaya*. First, if one who, having obtained the *Dharmakaya*, still cannot throw off the clinging of Dharma and who retains the self-view, he adheres only to the side of the *Dharmakaya*. Second, if one penetrates through the *Dharmakaya* but is not able to let go of it, he should be extremely cautious, and carefully examine his realization—if the slightest breathing-trace [of an object] remains, this, also, is an illness."

My comment on this is that the fault stems from the fact that a man regards the *object* as the Truth. He has not yet completely cut off the "thing itself" or penetrated through it, nor has he turned his body around and exhaled.<sup>14</sup> If anyone reaching this state lets in diverting thoughts, he will be demon-possessed and, in making a vain display of his knowledge, will work more harm than good.

Hsuan Sha said: "Some people claim that the nature of Wisdom inheres in the vivid-clear one [consciousness], that that which is conscious of seeing and hearing is the Wisdom itself. They [regard] the Five *Skandhas* [the consciousness group] as the Master. Alas, such teachers only lead the people astray! Such are, indeed, misleaders! Let me now ask you: If you consider this vivid-clear consciousness to be the true being, then why,



during sleep, do you lose this vivid-clear consciousness? Now do you understand? This error is called 'recognizing the thief as one's own son.' It is the very root of *Sangsara*, which generates and sustains all habitual thinking and delusory ideas."

Finally, Hsuan Sha said: ". . . some people begin to collect their thoughts, suppress their minds, and merge all things into the Emptiness. They close their eyelids and hide their eyeballs. As soon as distracting thoughts arise, they push them away. Even when the subtlest thought arises, they immediately suppress it. This kind of practice and understanding constitutes the very trap of the dead-void heretics. Such practitioners are living dead men. They become callous, impassive, senseless, and torpid. They resemble stupid thieves who try to steal a bell by stuffing their own ears!"

### ADMONISHMENTS TO THOSE WHO CANNOT BRING FORTH THE "DOUBT-SENSATION"

When working on Zen, some people, owing to their incapability of raising the "doubt-sensation," begin to delve into books and words. They try to employ the sayings and teachings of the Buddhas and Patriarchs, rationalizing them to produce explanations of the koans. They ratiocinate about the koans instead of "boring into" (*tсен*) them. They resent being asked to answer koans too difficult for them to solve. Such people should find good teachers; otherwise, they will become demon-possessed, and no one can save them.

When working on Zen, some people, owing to their incapability of raising the "doubt-sensation," begin to suppress the arising of thoughts. When all thoughts have been suppressed, these people experience a lucid and pure serenity, thoroughly clear, without the slightest

taint. This, however, constitutes the very root source of the consciousness which they cannot break through. This is the consciousness within the realm of life and death (*Sangsara*). It is not Zen. Their fault is that at the start of their Zen practice they did not work penetratingly enough on the *Hua Tou*: thus, the doubt-sensation did not arise. As a result they either suppress thought and become dead-void heretics, or, plunging into self-indulgent conceit, they mislead and cheat the ignorant, diverting people's faith and hindering their progress on the *Bodhi* Path.

When working on Zen, some people, owing to their incapability of raising the "doubt-sensation," begin to indulge themselves in all kinds of liberties. They pretend to live and act as "free and liberated" persons. When they meet others, they begin to sing and dance, to laugh and to "carry on." They compose poems on the river bank and sing hymns in the woods. Elsewhere, they chat and tell jokes. Some pace the bazaars and market places, declaring themselves "accomplished men." Whenever they see charitable Masters building temples, establishing orders, meditating, praying, or engaging in any kind of good works, they clap their hands, laugh, and ridicule them. With pride, vanity, and self-conceit, they ridicule the upright. Unable to practice Tao themselves, they create hindrances for others. Unable to recite the *sutras* and practice the devotions, they nevertheless impede the efforts of others to do so. They themselves cannot *tsen-Zen* [bore into Zen], but they hinder others in their *tsen-Zen* work. Although they cannot found temples or preach the Dharma, they oppose others doing so. When good Masters deliver public sermons, they come forward and pelt them with embarrassing questions, showing off before the public by asking one more question and demanding one more answer, by clapping their hands, or by making silly re-



marks. Wise Masters behold these actions as though watching ghosts at play. If the Master pays no attention to their ridiculous antics, these Zen lunatics tell everyone that he is an ignoramus. Ah, what a pity! How sad! All this happens because these people have been overrun by their *Sangsaric* thoughts for a long time. Having gone astray on the path of devils, they commit innumerable sins. Once their former good Karma is exhausted, they will go straight to Hell! Oh, what a pitiful affair!

ADMONISHMENTS TO THOSE WHO  
CAN BRING FORTH THE  
"DOUBT-SENSATION":

When working on Zen, if one can bring forth the "doubt-sensation," he is then in conformity with the principle of the *Dharmakaya*. He sees the whole earth brightly illuminated, without the slightest obstacle. But if he assumes that this is the Tao, and is unwilling to release it, he sits only on one side of the *Dharmakaya* and is unable to cut off the root of life. It seems to him that there is still something in the *Dharmakaya* to understand, something that can be taken hold of and enjoyed. He does not realize that such thoughts are childish. Because such a person has not cut off the liferoot [the cause of *Sangsara*], he is sick through and through. This is not Zen. If one reaches this state, he should put all of his body and mind into the work and take up this great matter, still [knowing that] no one is there to take it up. The Masters of ancient times said:

Bravely let go  
On the edge of the cliff.  
Throw yourself into the Abyss  
With decision and courage.  
You only revive after death.  
Verily, this is the Truth!

When working on Zen, if one can bring forth the "doubt-sensation," he is then in conformity with the principle of the *Dharmakaya*, and the whole world turns into a vortex. Immersed in the tossing waves and surging billows, he will enjoy himself greatly. However, when the Zen yogi reaches this state, he is apt to become attached to this wonderful experience which so fully absorbs him. Thus he will not progress further, even if pushed; nor will he turn back, even if he is pulled down. Consequently, he cannot put all his body and mind into the Work. He is like a tramp who has discovered a hill of gold. While knowing it clearly to be gold, he nevertheless cannot take it away with him and enjoy it at will. This is what the old Masters called "the treasure guard." Such a man is sick through and through. This is not Zen. When one reaches this state, he should disregard danger and death; only then will he conform with the Dharma.

As Master Tien Tung said, "The whole universe [then] becomes like cooked rice. One can dip his nose [in the bowl] and eat as much as he likes." Therefore, if at this stage he cannot do this, it is as though he were sitting beside a rice basket, or floating in the ocean—he cannot eat the rice or drink the water. He is hungry and thirsty unto death! Of what use is this? Therefore the proverb says, "After Enlightenment one should visit the Zen Masters." The sages of the past demonstrated the wisdom of this when, after their enlightenment, they visited the Zen Masters and improved themselves greatly. One who clings to his realization and is unwilling to visit the Masters, who can pull out his nails and spikes, is a man who cheats himself.

When working on Zen, if one is able to bring forth the "doubt-sensation" in conformity with the principle of the *Dharmakaya*, he will then see that the mountains are not mountains and that the water is not water. The whole earth becomes suddenly complete, lacking noth-



g. But just as quickly, when a discriminatory thought arises in his mind, a curtain seems to have been drawn before him, veiling his body and mind. When he wants to take up his [realization of the *Dharmakaya*], it refuses to return to him. He attempts to break through it, but it cannot be broken. Sometimes, when he takes it up, it seems to be there; but when he puts it down, it becomes nothing. I call such a man "one who cannot open his mouth and exhale, who cannot shift his body and change his place." At that moment he can do nothing for himself. When one reaches this state, his entire body becomes full of sicknesses. This is not Zen. The point is that people in ancient times practiced Zen in a single-minded manner! Their minds were sincerely focused. When they brought forth the "doubt-sensation," they saw that the mountain was not a mountain and that the water was not water; but they did not bring up any discriminatory reflections or arouse any second thoughts. Stubbornly and steadfastly they pushed forward; and then, suddenly, the "doubt-sensation" was broken up and their entire bodies became full of eyes. Then they saw that the mountain was still a mountain and that the water was still water. There was not the slightest trace of voidness to be found. From whence, then did these mountains, rivers, and the great earth itself come? Actually, not a thing has ever existed. When one reaches this state, he must go to the Zen Masters; otherwise, he is apt to go astray again. Because the wrong path, below "the cliff of decaying trees," has still one more branch running from it. If one reaches this state and still continues to work hard for advancement and does not stumble over the decaying trees, I, Po Shan, will gladly work with him as my companion and friend in Zen.

When working on Zen, if one can bring forth the "doubt-sensation," he is then in conformity with the

principle of the *Dharmakaya*. Nevertheless, at times there seems to be an appearance of something hazy before him as though some concreteness still existed there. While clinging to this hazy appearance and doubting this and that, he tells himself that he has understood the truth of *Dharmakaya* and realized the nature of the Universe. He is unaware that what he sees is illusory, a vision created by blinking. He is sick through and through. The man who has really plunged into the Truth [should feel] like this:

As the world stretches ten feet,  
The old mirror widens to match it.  
With his fearless body against the whole Universe,  
He cannot find the six organs, sense objects, or the great earth.

Since in this state the organs, senses, all objects, and even the great heaven and earth become empty and nothing exists, where can one find any trace of body, objects, materials, and that hazy appearance of something existing? Master Yun Men also pointed this trait out to us. If one can clear up this error, the other faults will automatically dissolve. I always warn my students that many kinds of sickness prevail in the realm of the *Dharmakaya*. Here the important thing is to catch the most deadly disease once. Only then will one recognize the very root of this illness. Even if all sentient beings on this great earth practiced Zen, none of them would be immune from catching the sickness of *Dharmakaya*. Of course, this does not apply to people full of blindness and stupidity.

When working on Zen, if one can bring forth the "doubt-sensation," he is then in conformity with the principle of the *Dharmakaya*. Thereupon he ponders what the old Masters have said:



The whole earth is but one of my eyes,  
 But a spark of my illuminating light;  
 The whole earth is in this tiny spark within me.

He then begins to intellectualize, and quotes sayings from the *sutras*, such as, "All the truths in the infinite universes are found within a tiny mote of dust." With such sayings he tries to conceptualize the truth, and is unwilling to make further efforts to progress. In fact, he becomes trapped in a situation wherein he can neither move nor stay alive. Although, with this rationalized understanding, he considers himself an enlightened being, actually, his body is full of sickness. He has not yet attained Zen. His experience may accord with the Principle [*Li*], but if he cannot pulverize this experience and reduce it to nought, all his acquired understanding is only fit to be called a "hindrance to *Li*" [Truth]. He has fallen on the very edge of the *Dharmakaya*. Furthermore, since he has been dragged along by his conceptualizing mind, he can never penetrate to the depth of *Li*. Unable to strangle this unwieldy monkey, how can he revive from death? A Zen student should know that from the very beginning, when the "doubt-sensation" arises, he should try to bring it into conformity with *Li*. With this conformity achieved, he should try to plumb the very depths. Reaching the depths, he should then perform a complete somersault from the top of an eight-thousand-foot cliff—plunging down to the plain, then springing up out of the Jang River waving his hands. This is the way a great man should work on Zen.

When working on Zen, if one can bring forth the "doubt-sensation," he is then in conformity with the principle of the *Dharmakaya*. While walking, standing, sitting, or sleeping, he always feels as if enveloped in sunlight or living in the glow of a lamp. But sometimes the whole experience seems flat and tasteless. Then he

drops everything completely and meditates until he reaches a state as limpid as water, as lucent as a pearl, as clear as the wind, and as bright as the moon. At this time he feels his body and mind, the earth and the heavens, fuse into one pellucid whole—pure, alert, and wide-awake. This, he begins to think, is the ultimate Enlightenment. The fact is that he really cannot turn his body about and exhale, or walk through the market with his hands at his sides; nor is he willing to visit the Zen teachers for appraisal or advice. He may also form some strange ideas about the Illuminating Purity and call his experience true Enlightenment. As a matter of fact, his body reeks with sicknesses. He has not yet gained Zen.

When working on Zen, if one brings forth the “doubt-sensation,” he is in accord with the principle of the *Dharmakaya*. He may then consider the *Dharmakaya* as something supernatural. With this notion in mind, he begins to see lights, the aura, and all sorts of different visions. He believes these to be holy revelations and, with great pride, begins to tell people about them, claiming that he has attained the great Enlightenment. In fact, however, sicknesses infest his body. This is not Zen. He should have known that all these visions could only have been produced by focalizing his own delusory thoughts, or that they were the conjurations of demons taking advantage of the opportunity; or, possibly, that they were sent by heavenly beings or gods, such as Indra, to test him. The meditation practices of the Pure Land School furnish an example of the first case, that is, the creation of visions through focalizing delusory thoughts. The practitioners of the Pure Land School meditate on images of the Buddhas, concentrating on visualizing them until they see visions of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas as stated in the *sutras* of the Sixteen Observations. All these experiences, which accord with the teaching of the Pure Land School, are good, but they are not Zen.



The second case, the opportunity taken by demons invade the mind of the meditator to confuse him with illusory visions, is clearly described in the *Surangama Sutra*: "If, while realizing the emptiness of the five aggregates, the mind of the yogi is still attached to anything, demons will conjure up various forms before his eyes."

An example of the third case is that of the god Indra, who conjured up dreadful figures to frighten Gautama Buddha before his enlightenment. When Buddha was not frightened, Indra called up forms of beautiful women to allure him, but Buddha had no desire toward them. Whereupon Indra appeared before Buddha in his original form, made obeisance, and said: "The great mountain can be moved, the great ocean can be drained, but nothing can shake your mind." A Zen proverb also says:

The feats of demons are exhaustible,  
But not an old man's mind.  
For how can he exhaust it  
When he sees and hears nothing?

A man who is truly working on Zen has no time for illusory visions or even for a second thought, not though a sharp knife be pressed against his throat. If one's experience really conforms to the Truth, he realizes that there is no object outside of his own mind. Can he find division apart from the mind which mirrors it?

When working on Zen, if one brings forth the "doubt-sation," he is in conformity with the principle of the *muromachi*. He is then apt at all times to feel a lightness and ease of body and mind, feeling thoroughly free in all activities and circumstances, and that nothing can hinder him. This, however, is merely the sign of the initial stage of one's meeting with the Tao. It is just the union of the four elements harmonizing within the physi-

cal body. Temporary and contingent, it is a state by no means absolute or permanent. When uninformed persons reach it, they take it for the great Enlightenment, shrug off their doubt-sensation, and make no further efforts to advance in Zen Work. Although to some extent able to enter into the Truth [*Li*], they do not realize that the roots-of-life are still not yet cut out of them. Therefore, all they have gained still lies within the framework and functioning of the inferential consciousness. They are sick through and through. They have not yet gained Zen. They have failed to reach a deep state of "truth" at the outset, and have turned about too soon. Even though they may possess a deep understanding, they cannot apply it; even though they have acquired the "live remark" (Chinese: *huo chu*),<sup>15</sup> they should still continue to cultivate and preserve it in quiet retreat near a river or in a forest. They should never be anxious to become Zen Masters at once, or allow conceit and pride to rule them.

The point is that in the very beginning, when the "doubt-sensation" arises, it congeals into a thick, ball-like mass. At this crucial time the important thing is to let this doubt-mass break up by itself. This is the only way to make a profitable gain. Otherwise, if understanding only a little of the *Li* principle, one cannot throw the doubt-mass away immediately, he will certainly not be able to have a thorough death and a real breakthrough of the doubt-sensation [*I-chin*]. This is not practicing Zen. Such a one may label himself a Zen Buddhist, but he will only fritter his life away. The course he should take is to visit the great Zen Masters, because they are the great physicians of Zen, capable of curing the serious illnesses of Zen students. They also serve as generous and sagacious patrons who may fulfill one's wishes. At this stage one should never let contentment or conceit keep him back from seeing the Z



achers. He should recognize that unwillingness to see those who know more than he does is the disease of otism. Among all the sicknesses of Zen, none is worse than this.

#### 4. *Discourse of Master Han Shan*

Concerning this great matter, the Tao, everyone has assessed it from the beginning. It is always with each you. The difficulty is that from the very no-beginning the Wonderful Illumination has been covered over by seeds of passion, streams of thought, the flow of conceptualization, and deeply rooted habitual thinking. Therefore, we have never been able to grasp the actual realization itself, but instead have wandered among the shadows of delusory thoughts about mind, body, and the world. This is why we have been ever roaming in *avastarsa*.

Previously, the Buddhas and Patriarchs who incarnated in this world, through the use of thousands of words and various methods, preached either the Doctrine, or Zen.<sup>16</sup> All their teachings were nothing but instruments to crush the habitual "clings" infecting human thought. There is no Dharma in the sense of something real or concrete in that which they have handed down to us. The so-called practice or work is merely a method for purifying the shadows of our habitual thinking and flowing thoughts. To concentrate all one's efforts to this end is called "work." If suddenly the surging thoughts stop, one clearly sees that his self is originally pure, genuine, vast, illuminating, permanent, and devoid of objects. This is called "Wu" (Japanese: *Satori*). There is nothing outside of the mind, nothing which can be worked upon, and nothing to be

enlightened. . . . However, the egotistic passions, long accumulated and rooted within us, are difficult to wipe out.

Fortunately, in this incarnation, through the help and instruction of [right] teachers, the *Prajna* seed within you has had an opportunity to grow. Thus your religious aspirations and your determination have been awakened. But you must realize that it is not easy to pull out at once the roots of *Sangsara* which have been deeply embedded within you from beginningless time. This task is not trivial! Only men of will and might, brave enough to shoulder such a burden and to press straight forward without the slightest hesitation or timidity, will be able to enter into it [the Tao]. For the rest of the people the chance is very, very slight. An old proverb says: "This matter is like one man against ten thousand enemies. How true this saying is! Generally speaking, at this time when Buddhism is in a state of degeneration,<sup>17</sup> there are many yogis who practice the Tao, but few of them can come to the actual Realization. Gropers and hard workers are many, but beneficiaries and finders of the Path remain few. Why? This is because most yogis do not know how to work, how to enter into the task at the very outset. What they do is to fill their minds with the words and ideas that they have formed through thinking, or they measure things by means of the discriminating mind, or they suppress the stream of thought, or dazzle themselves with visionary bewilderments. Some of them have stuffed themselves with the mysterious words of the old Masters, and treated these instructions or understandings as their own. They do not know that all these things are useless. This is what is meant by the saying, "To acquire understanding at the hands of others is to close the gate of self-enlightenment." The first step you should take in Zen work is to forget about all understanding and knowledge and concentrate on one



thought [Chinese: *i nien*]. Firmly believe that your self-mind is originally pure and clear, without the slightest trace of any existence—bright, perfect, and ubiquitous throughout the entire universe. From the beginning there was no body, mind, or world, nor any erroneous thoughts or infective passions. Right at this instant [the appearance of this] one mind is [in reality] nonexistent. All manifestations before my eyes are also delusions devoid of substance. They are merely shadows within the mind. With this definite understanding, one should work in the following manner: *Search out the point where your thoughts arise and disappear. See where a thought arises and where it vanishes.* Keep this point in mind and try to break right through it; try to crush it with all your might! If you can crush it to pieces, all will dissolve and vanish away. At this time, however, one must not follow it [the instantaneous experience] nor try to continue it. Master Yung Chia once admonished, "The thought of continuation should be cut short." This is because floating, delusory thoughts are virtually rootless and unreal. Never treat the distracted thought as a concrete thing. When it arises, notice it right away but never try to suppress it. Let it go and watch it as one watches a calabash floating on the surface of a stream.

What you should do is take up this awareness as if holding a sharp sword in your hand. No matter whether Buddha or devils come, just cut them off like a snarl of entangled silk threads. Use all your attention and strength patiently to push your mind to the very dead end [of consciousness]; just push it on and on.

Those who determine to practice the Dharma should believe firmly the teaching of Mind-only. Buddha said, "All the Three Kingdoms<sup>18</sup> are mind, all ten thousand Dharmas are consciousness." All Buddhism is nothing but an exposition of this sentence. Ignorance or Enlightenment, virtue or wickedness, cause or effect, are

nothing but one's own mind. Not one iota of anything exists outside of Mind. The Zen yogi should completely cast aside his former knowledge and understandings. Here scholarship or cleverness is useless. Rather, he should look on the whole world as hallucinatory. What he sees are mirages, mirror-images, like the moon reflected in the water. The sounds he hears are hymns of the wind blowing through the trees. He should see all manifestations as clouds floating in the sky—changing and unreal. Not only the outer world, but all habitual thoughts, passions, distractions, and desires within one's own mind are, likewise, insubstantial, non-concrete, rootless, and floating. Whenever any thought arises, you should try to find its source; never let it go easily or be cheated by it. If you can practice like this, you will be doing some solid work.

There are many koans which help you to work in the tumult of worldly activities, like the one, "Who is he who recites the name of Buddha?" Although this koan is most helpful, you must realize that it is merely a stone for knocking upon the door; when the door is opened the stone is thrown away. To work on the koan you must have firmness, unshakable determination, and solid perseverance. You should not have the least hesitation or irresolution, nor should you practice one koan today and another one tomorrow. You should not entertain any doubts about attaining Enlightenment, nor about the koan being too deep or mysterious, and so on. All such thoughts are hindrances. I point them out to you now, so that you will notice them later when they come up. When your work is being done well, things in the outer world will not bother you very much. But the trouble is that mental disturbances will arise feverishly in your mind without any obvious reason. Sometimes desires and lust well up; sometimes an indescribable restlessness bursts forth. Numerous other hindrances



will also appear. All these difficulties will tire you mentally and physically, so that you will not know what to do. You must then realize that all these harassing experiences are produced by your meditation effort, which has stimulated into activity the seeds of habit deeply hidden in your Store [*Alaya*] Consciousness from the very no-beginning-time. At this crucial stage, you must recognize them thoroughly and break through them. Never take them as real; never subject yourself to their control and deceptions. What you should do is to refresh your mind. Alert yourself, and with a high spirit look right at the arising point of the distracting thought. Look into it to its very bottom; push your mind on and on to the [impenetrable state]! Say to yourself, "There is no such thing in me; where do you come from? I must see your naked body!" In this manner, exert your mind to the very, very end, wipe out all traces of [thoughts], kill them and make all the deities and ghosts cry out. If you work like this, the good news will soon come to you. If you can break one thought into pieces, all thoughts will instantaneously be stripped off. This will be like the emergence of a clear limpid pond when the mists have vanished. After this stage, you will feel comfortable and infinitely light, filled with boundless joy. But this is just the beginning of knowing how to work; there is nothing wonderful about it. Never rejoice and wallow in this ravishing experience; if you do, the devil of joy will possess you.

Those whose hindrances are too great, whose seeds of passion are too strong, and whose habitual thoughts are too inveterately rooted in their Store Consciousness, not knowing how to observe their minds or how to work on the koans, should practice the prostrations before Buddha, recite the holy *sutras*, and confess their wrongdoings. These persons should also invoke the mantrams [holy incantations]. For through the inscrutable symbols

of the Buddhas one's hindrances can all be overcome. This is because all the holy mantrams are *Vajra* heart-symbols of the Buddhas. Holding them in our hands as thunderbolts, we can crush all obstacles. The essence of the esoteric instruction of the Buddhas and Patriarchs in the past was comprised in the mantrams. *The difference here is that the Buddha tells us plainly, while the Zen Masters keep the matter secret and do not talk about it.* This is only because the Zen Masters are afraid of people becoming attached to, or misunderstanding, this practice, and not because they do not use it themselves. However, to practice the mantrams, one must do so regularly. After a long time one will find them a great help; but one should never hope for or expect a miraculous response from the Buddhas.

It is important for one to know that there are two kinds of [Zen] yogis: those who attain "Wu" [*Satori*] first and then practice, and those who practice first and then attain "Wu." There are also two kinds of "Wu": the "understanding-Wu" [Chinese: *chieh wu*] and the "realization-Wu" [Chinese: *cheng wu*].<sup>k</sup> The "understanding-Wu" means coming to know the mind through the teachings and words of the Buddhas and Patriarchs, but here most people fall into conceptualization and intellection, and cannot feel free when they encounter the activities and conflicts of life. Their minds and outer objects [Chinese: *chin*] are discrete from each other—not interfused or merged; thus they face obstacles all the time. This is called the "resembling-Wu," not the real "Wu." The "realization-Wu" results from solid and steadfast work on the problem [koan]. Those who drive their minds to the very dead end will find that their thoughts suddenly stop. Instantaneously they behold their self-mind, as if a vagabond son had met his own loving mother at the crossroads of the bazaar. Like one drinking water, the yogi *knows* whether it is cold or



warm, and there is no room for doubt; nor is he able to express this feeling to anyone else. This is the real "Wu." Possessing this "Wu" experience, one merges his mind with all conditions of life, cleansing all the present karmas and streams of passion and desire. Even doubts and vagaries are fused into the one real Mind. *This "realization-Wu," however, has different degrees of profundity.* If one is able to work on the basic principle and breaks right through the nest of the Eight Consciousnesses, to turn over the cave of blindness and with one great leap to pass right through, then there is nothing more for him to attain. He is indeed deserving of consideration as a highly endowed person. His realization is the deepest. Many of those who practice through gradual steps gain only shallow realizations. The worst thing is to be content with a small and shallow attainment. Never allow yourself to fall into the hallucinations of fantasy. Why? Because if the Eight Consciousnesses are not broken through, whatever wonderful things one sees or one does are merely works of the [Sangsaric] consciousness and senses [Chinese: *shih, sheng*]. If one treats all these phenomena as real, it is comparable to accepting a thief as one's son. In the past, the elders said clearly:

"Those ignorant yogis who know not the Truth cling to the imagined 'absolute spirit,' which is in fact the basic cause compelling them to wander in *Sangsara* from the very no-beginning-time. Only fools call this '[clinging-bound] absolute spirit' the 'Primordial Being'!" That is the most important gate one must break through.

The so-called *abrupt enlightenment and gradual practice*<sup>m</sup> refers to the person who has already attained the "Wu" in a thorough-going manner, but who still cannot cleanse all at once the habitual thoughts within him. He should then work on identifying his "Wu" realization with all that is encountered in his daily activity, and

should put his understanding into actual use by merging it with objective events. As one portion of objective manifestation is merged with the "Wu" realization, one portion of the *Dharmakaya* will be unfolded; and as one portion of delusory thought is dissolved, one portion of the Wisdom (*Prajna*) will come to light.

The crucial point of this practice is continuity and consistency.

## SHORT AUTOBIOGRAPHIES OF FIVE ZEN MASTERS

### *1. Epitome of Zen Master Han Shan's Autobiography*

I was born at Chuan Chiao in the county of Nanking. My mother, a pious Buddhist, had been a worshipper of the All-merciful Kwan Yin all her life. One day she dreamed that the All-merciful Mother brought into the house a child which she received with warm embraces. As a result, she became pregnant, and on the twelfth of October, 1545,<sup>19</sup> I was born.

In 1546, when I was twelve months old, a serious illness carried me to the point of death. My mother prayed to the All-merciful One and vowed that if I recovered she would offer me to the monastery to become a monk. When I recovered, she duly enlisted my name in the Monastery of Longevity.

When I was three years old, I preferred to sit alone and did not care to play with the other children. My grandfather would always exclaim, "This child is like a wooden pole!"

When I was seven years old, my mother sent me to school. At that time I had an uncle who loved me very



much. One day, just before I arrived home from school, he died. When I saw him lying so still on the bed, my mother tried to deceive me about his death, saying, "Your uncle is asleep. You might wake him up." Whereupon I called to my uncle a few times, but he did not answer me. At this my aunt, greatly grief-stricken, cried out to him, "Oh, my Heaven! Where have you gone?" Very puzzled, I said to my mother, "My uncle's body lies right here. Why does my aunt say he has gone away?" Then my mother said, "Your uncle is dead." "If one dies, where does one then go?" I asked her, and from that moment this question was deeply impressed on my mind.

After some time, my aunt gave birth to a child. When my mother took me to see the new-born baby for the first time, I asked, "How did this baby get into the belly of my aunt?" My mother patted me and said, "Foolish child! How did you get into my belly!"

From that day on, the big question of life and death obsessed my thought. It stuck in my mind and weighed like lead on my heart.

When I was eight years old, I was boarded in the home of some relatives across the river so that I could be nearer my school. My mother forbade me to come home oftener than once a month. One day, however, I refused to return to school after my monthly holiday. When I told my mother that I could not bear to leave her, she became furious. She slapped me and chased me to the river bank. But there I would not leave her to board the ferry boat. In a rage, my mother grabbed me by the hair, threw me into the river, and then turned homeward without once looking back. My grandmother, who was nearby, called for help and I was saved. Finally, when I reached home, my mother exclaimed, "What is the use of keeping this trash alive! It would be better if he had drowned!" After this she beat me and tried to

chase me away. Then I decided that my mother was too stern and cruel and that, henceforth, I would not go home any more.

I learned later that my mother many times stood alone on the river bank weeping. When my grandmother discovered this, she upbraided her. With tears flowing down her cheeks, my mother answered, "I must make him overcome his too affectionate nature so that he can study seriously."

When I was nine years old, I entered the monastery to study. One day I overheard a monk reciting the *Sutra of the All-merciful One*. Thus I became aware that Kwan Yin could save us from all the sufferings of this world. At this realization, I became very excited and borrowed the *sutra* so that I might read and study it privately.

On a later occasion, when I had accompanied my mother while she burned incense and made obeisance to Kwan Yin, I said, "Do you know the *sutra* of the Bodhisattva Kwan Yin?"

My mother said "No," whereupon I immediately recited the *sutra* for her. This pleased her very much and she asked, "Where did you learn this?", for the manner and voice in which I recited the *sutra* were just like that of the old monk.

In 1555 I was ten. My mother was pressing me to study so hard that I was unhappy about it.

"Why should I study?" I asked her.

"To get a position in the government," <sup>20</sup> she replied.

"And what kind of position can I have later in the government?" I asked.

Mother said, "You can start in a low position and it is possible to rise to become Prime Minister."

"Even if I become Prime Minister," I said, "what then?"

"That is as far as one can go."



"What is the use of becoming a high government official? To toil all one's life and get nothing is futile. I want to obtain something of eternal value."

My mother exclaimed, "Oh, a useless son like you can be nothing but a wandering monk!"

I asked, "What good is it to become a monk?"

"A monk," she said, "is a disciple of the Buddha and can go anywhere in the world. He is a man of true freedom. Everywhere people will give him offerings and serve him."

"This seems very good to me. I should like to be a monk."

"I am afraid," my mother replied, "that you have no such merits."

When I appeared surprised at this, my mother continued, "There have been many *Chuang Yuan* (Champion Scholars)<sup>21</sup> in this world, but Buddhas and Patriarchs do not often appear."

"I have such merit," I insisted, "but I was afraid you would not let me go ahead."

"If you have such merit," my mother replied, "I will let you go your way."

This promise of hers I cherished in my heart.

One day in 1556, when I was eleven years old, several persons wearing bamboo rain-hats, with carrying poles upon their shoulders, approached our house. At once I asked my mother, "Who are these strangers?"

"They are traveling monks," she replied. I was delighted and scrutinized them most carefully. When they had nearly reached our house, they put down their carrying poles and rested under a tree nearby. They asked us where they could find some food. My mother told them to wait, and immediately began preparing food for them, attending and serving them with great respect and veneration. After eating, the monks stood up and shouldered their poles, but raised only one hand to express

their thanks. My mother, however, waved them off, saying, "Please do not thank me." The monks departed without uttering a word. I then remarked to my mother, "These monks seem impolite! They did not even say 'Thank you' but just left!" "If they had thanked me," my mother explained, "I would have obtained less merit from this good deed." I then said to myself, privately, that their action showed the supremacy of the priesthood. This encounter encouraged me more strongly than ever in my decision to become a monk. The only obstacle was that I did not then have the opportunity.

In 1557 I was twelve. Usually I did not like to mingle with worldly people or take part in their affairs. Whenever my father tried to arrange a marriage for me, I stopped him at once. One day I heard a monk from the Capital say that in the monastery of Pao En lived a great Master named Hsi Lin. Immediately, I wanted to go to see him. I asked my father's permission to go, but he refused. Then I asked my mother to intercede for me. She reasoned, "It is better to let our son follow his own wish and to help him to accomplish it." That October I was sent to the monastery. As soon as the Grand Master saw me, he was pleased, remarking, "This boy is not a usual person. It would be a pitiable waste if he became an ordinary monk." At that time Master Wu Chi was preaching a *sutra* in the monastery. The Grand Master brought me to the meeting. When Master Ta Chou Chao saw me, he was delighted and exclaimed, "This child will become the master of men and Heaven."<sup>22</sup> He then patted me and asked, "Would you rather be a high officer in the government or a Buddha?" I answered, "A Buddha, of course." Then he turned to the others, saying, "We must not underrate this child. He should be well educated."

Although I did not understand a word of the lecture while I was listening to it, my heart became eager and



fervent as if it knew something but could not express it in words.

In 1564, when I was nineteen, many of my friends gained honor by passing the official examination.<sup>23</sup> My friends urged me to take the examination, also. When Master Yun Ku heard of this, he became worried that I might be persuaded to engage in worldly affairs; he, therefore, encouraged me to practice religion and to strive for Zen. He related to me many stories of the Masters of the past, and showed me the book called *The Biographies of the Great Monks*. Before I had finished reading the *Life of Chung Feng*, I was so moved and exalted that I sighed to myself, saying, "Oh, this is what I would like to do!" Thereupon I made up my mind to devote my life to Buddhism. I then besought the Grand Master to ordain me.

Discarding all worldly affairs and learning, I devoted myself to the study of Zen, but could not get anywhere. Then I concentrated on reciting the name of Buddha Amida, day and night, without interruption. Before long, Buddha Amida appeared before me in a dream, sitting high in the sky in the direction of the setting sun. Seeing his kind face and eyes radiant with compassion, clear and vivid, I prostrated myself at his feet with mixed feelings of love, sorrow, and happiness. I said to myself, "Where are the Bodhisattvas Kwan Yin and Ta Shih Chih? I wish to see them." Immediately the Bodhisattvas Kwan Yin and Ta Shih Chih displayed the upper halves of their bodies. Thus I saw clearly the Three Holy Ones and was convinced that I would be successful in my efforts at devotion.

That winter our monastery invited the Master Wu Chi to preach the philosophy of Hua Yen. When the lecture came to the point of the Ten Mysterious Gates<sup>24</sup>—the eternal realm of the Ocean Seal—I suddenly realized the infinite and all-inclusive totality of the uni-

verse. So deeply impressed was I with a profound admiration for Ching Liang [the founder of the Hua Yen sect] that I adopted one of his names and called myself Ching Yin. I then put my understanding before the Master Wu Chi. He said to me, "Oh, so you wish to follow the path of Hua Yen! Good! But do you know why he called himself Ching Liang [Pure and Cool]? It was because he used to dwell on the Ching Liang Mountain, cool in summer and icy and frozen in winter." From that moment, whether walking or standing still, I always saw before me a fantasy world of ice and snow. I then made up my mind to go and dwell on that mountain; nothing in the world could attract me any more. The yearning to renounce this world arose continuously within me.

On the sixteenth of January, 1565, when I was twenty, my Grand Master died. A few days before his death he summoned all the monks in the monastery and said, "I am now eighty-three years old. Very soon I will be leaving this world. I have some eighty disciples, but the one who will carry on my work is Han Shan. After my death, you should all obey his orders and not neglect his injunctions just because of his age." On the seventh day of the New Year my Grand Master, wearing his formal dress, called each monk in his own room to say good-bye. All of us were much surprised by this action. Three days later he settled his affairs and made his will. At the time he appeared to have only a slight illness. We took him some medicine, but he refused it, saying, "I am going away; what is the use of taking drugs?" Then, he summoned all the monks in the monastery and asked them to recite the name of Buddha Amida for him. We prayed thus for him five days and nights. Rosary in hand, he died in the sitting posture, peacefully reciting the name of Buddha Amida. Not long after his death the room in which he had lived for thirty years



was destroyed by fire, as if to give an omen to his followers.

In October of the same year Master Yun Ku opened up a "Meditation Assembly" [Chinese: *Ch'an Chi*]. He called together fifty-three nationally known elders in order to reveal and propagate the teaching of meditation through its actual practice. Because of the recommendation of Master Yun Ku, I was able to join the assembly. At first I did not know how to work [meditate] and was greatly disturbed by my ignorance. After burning incense and offering it to the Master, I asked him for instruction. He first taught me how to work on the koan of "Who is the one who recites the name of Buddha Amida?" I concentrated for the next three months on working on this koan without a single distracting thought. It was as if I were absorbed in a dream. During this whole period I was not aware of anyone in the assembly or of anything happening around me. But in the first few days of my earnest striving I was much too anxious and impatient. My impatience caused the rapid growth of a carbuncle on my back which swelled to a large size and was acutely inflamed. My Master was moved with great pity for me. I then wrapped a stole around my shoulder and prayed mournfully and with great sincerity before the Bodhisattva Vatou [one of the Guardians of the Dharma], making this vow, "This affliction must be a Karmic debt which I owe from a previous incarnation and which I must pay back in this life. But in order that I may complete this meditation period, I beg you to postpone it to a later date. Before you as witness, I promise to pay this debt after the meditation practice, and I also promise to recite the *Hua Yen* [*Avatamsaka*] *Sutra* ten times to show my gratitude and thankfulness to you." Thus I made my vow. Feeling very tired, I went to bed that evening, not even waking when the time for meditation was over.

The next day the Master asked, "How is your sickness?" I answered, "I do not feel anything wrong now." He then looked at my back and found that the carbuncle had healed. All the monks were moved with admiration and astonishment. Thus I was able to complete the meditation practice.

When the Assembly for Meditation ended, I still felt as if I were in meditation all the time, even while walking through the bazaar or on a busy street.

In 1566 I was twenty-one. That winter I attended the lectures on the *Fa Hua Sutra* given by Master Wu Chi. I had made up my mind to go far away for a meditation period and was looking for a suitable companion, but had not found the right person. One day, however, I saw a traveling monk named Miao Feng, who seemed to be an unusual and genuine person. But a few days later he left the monastery without my knowledge; presumably, he feared that a too close association with me might hinder his freedom.

In 1571 I was twenty-six years old. A very heavy snow had fallen that year, and by the time I reached Yang Chow I had become very ill. After being sick for some time, I had to beg for food in the street. But no one gave me anything. I wondered, asking myself, "Why will no one give me any food?" Suddenly, I became aware that I still had some silver money in my pocket. I then collected all the Buddhist and Taoist monks who were unable to obtain food in the snow, and bought them dinner in an eating house, spending all the money I had. The next morning, when I went to the bazaar again, I experienced no difficulty in begging and obtaining food. I was so delighted that I exclaimed to myself, "Now my strength is sufficient to counter the weight of hundreds of tons!"

In 1574 I was twenty-nine. I had come across Miao



Feng again in the capital. That September we journeyed to Ho Tung. The local magistrate, Mr. Chen, became our sincere patron. He contributed a sum for making a block printing of the *Book of Shao Lun*. I edited and checked the work for him.

I had had difficulty in understanding the thesis, "On Immutability," by Shao, especially the part about the Whirlwind and the Resting Mountain on which I had had doubts for some years. But this time when I reached the point where the aged Brahmin returned home after his lifetime of priesthood and heard his neighbors exclaim, "Oh, look, the man of old days still exists!" to which he replied, "Oh no, I may look like that old man, but actually I am not he," I suddenly was awakened. Then I said to myself, "In reality, all dharmas have no coming and no going! Oh, how true, how true this is!" I left my seat immediately and prostrated myself before the Buddha. As I made my obeisance I felt, "Nothing moves or arises." I then lifted up the curtain on the door and stood on the platform outside. A sudden gust of wind swept the trees in the courtyard, whirling leaves against the sky. Nevertheless, while I watched the flying leaves, I did not feel that anything was moving. "This," I thought to myself, "is the meaning of the Whirlwind and the Resting Mountain. Oh, now I understand!" Later, even while passing urine, I did not feel that there was anything flowing. I said to myself, "Oh, this is what is meant by the saying that rivers flow all day, but nothing flows." From that time on, the problem of life and death—the doubts on the "wherefrom" before birth and the "whereto" after death—was completely broken. Thereupon I composed the following stanza:

Life comes and death goes,  
The water flows and the flower withers.  
Oh, today I know my nostrils were facing downwards.

The second morning after this experience, Miao Feng came in. As soon as he saw me, he exclaimed delightedly, "What have you found?" "Last evening," I said, "I saw two iron oxen fighting with each other along the river bank until they both fell into the water. Since then, I have not heard anything of them." Miao Feng smiled. "Congratulations!" he said. "You have seized the means by which you can afford to dwell on the mountain from now on."

Soon after this Zen Master Fa Kuang, whom I had long greatly admired, also came. I was pleased to have this opportunity to meet and study under him. After we had exchanged a few words I was very impressed and begged him for instruction. He told me that I should work on Zen by dissociating from mind, consciousness, and perceptions, and also that I should keep away from both the holy and the mundane paths of learning. I benefited greatly by his instructions. When he talked, his voice was like the throbbing of a heavenly drum. I then realized that the speech and behavior of those who actually understood the Truth of Mind are quite different from the speech and behavior of ordinary people.

One day, after reading some of my poems, Master Fa Kuang sighed, "This is really beautiful poetry. Where else can one find such wonderful lines? Yes, these poems are good, but one hole still remains unopened," he laughed. I asked, "Master, have you opened that hole yet?" He replied, "For the past thirty years I have trapped tigers and caught dragons, but today a rabbit came out of the grass and frightened me to death!" I said, "Master, you are not the one who can trap tigers and catch dragons!" The Master raised his staff and was about to strike me when I snatched it and grabbed his long beard, saying, "You said it was a rabbit, but actually it was a frog!" The Master then laughed and let me go.



One day the Master said to me, "It is not necessary for you to go away to a far place to seek a Zen teacher. I hope you will stay with this old man so that we can work together on subduing the Ox."<sup>25</sup> I said to him, "Your wit, eloquence, and understanding of Buddhism are in no way inferior to that of Ta Hui. However, there are some peculiarities in your manner that puzzle me. I am conscious that your hands are always waving and your mouth constantly murmuring as if reading or chanting something. In short, your manner seems rather like that of a lunatic. What is the reason for this?" Master Fa Kuang replied, "This is my Zen-sickness."<sup>26</sup> When the 'Wu' [*Satori*] experience came for the first time, automatically and instantaneously poems and stanzas poured from my mouth, like a gushing river flowing day and night without ceasing. I could not stop, and since then I have had this Zen-sickness." I asked, "What can one do when it first appears?" He replied, "When this Zen-sickness first appears, one should notice it immediately. If he is not aware of it, a Zen Master should correct it for him at once by striking him severely and beating it out of him. Then the Master should put him to sleep. When he awakes he will be over the sickness. I regret to say that my Master was not alert and severe enough to beat it out of me at that time."

In 1575 I was thirty years old. With Miao Feng I went to Wu Tai Mountain. We stayed at Lung Men on the north side. On the third of March we cleared the snow from an old house of several rooms and took residence there. Ranges of mountains completely covered with snow and ice surrounded our abode. This was the place I had dreamed of for a long, long time. I felt as happy as if I had entered into a heavenly paradise. Both mind and body felt at ease and comfortable.

After some time Miao Feng went to Yeh Tai, while I remained alone. I fixed my mind upon one thought

and spoke to no one. If anyone came to the door I merely looked at him and said nothing. After a while, whenever I looked at people, they appeared like dead logs. My mind entered a state in which I could not recognize a single word. At the start of this meditation, when I heard the howling of the storms and the sounds of the ice grinding against the mountains, I felt very disturbed. The tumult seemed as great as that of thousands of soldiers and horses in battle. [Later] I asked Miao Feng about it. He said, "All feelings and sensations arise from one's own mind; they do not come from outside. Have you heard what the monks in the old days said—'If one does not allow his mind to stir when he hears the sound of flowing water for thirty years, he will come to the realization of the Miraculous Understanding of Avalokitesvara.' " <sup>27</sup> I then went to sit on a solitary wooden bridge and meditated there every day. At first I heard the stream flowing very clearly, but as time passed I could hear the sound only if I willed it. If I stirred my mind, I could hear it, but if I kept my mind still I heard nothing. One day, while sitting on the bridge, I suddenly felt that I had no body. It had vanished, together with the sound around me. Since then I have never been disturbed by any sound.

My daily food was a gruel of bran, weeds, and rice water. When I first came to the mountain someone had given me three pecks of rice, which lasted for more than six months. One day, after having my gruel, I took a walk. Suddenly I stood still, filled with the realization that I had no body or mind. All I could see was one great illuminating Whole—omnipresent, perfect, lucid, and serene. It was like an all-embracing mirror from which the mountains and rivers of the earth were projected as reflections. When I awoke from this experience, I felt as "clear-and-transparent" as though my



body and mind did not exist at all, whereupon I composed the following stanza:

Abruptly, the violence of mind stops;  
 Inner body, outer world—both are transparently clear  
 After the great overturn,  
 The great Voidness is broken through.  
 Oh! How freely the myriad manifestations  
 Come and go!

From then on, both the inward and the outward experience became lucidly clear. Sounds, voices, visions, scenes, forms, and objects were no longer hindrances. All my former doubts dissolved into nothing. When I returned to my kitchen, I found the cauldron covered with dust. Many days had passed during my experience of which I, being alone, was unaware.

In the summer of that year Hsuen Lang came from the north to visit me, but he stayed only one day, because he could not stand the cold and gloom of my isolated hermitage.

In 1576 I was thirty-one years old. Although I had attained this "Wu" experience, there was no Master at hand to certify or approve it. Therefore, I read the *Leng Yen* [*Surangama*] *Sutra* with the hope of testing my "Wu" experience against it. Since I had never studied this *sutra* with any Master, its contents were not known to me. I decided to read it, using only my intuition, and to stop whenever even the slightest intellectual reasonings began to arise. In such manner I read the *sutra* for eight months and came to understand its meaning thoroughly.

In October of that year my patron, Mr. Hu, invited me to stay at his house. His friend, Mr. Kao, asked me to write a poem for him. I replied, "There is not a single word in my heart now. How can I write you a poem?" However, both he and Mr. Hu earnestly entreated me

to write a poem. After their repeated insistences, I could not refuse. I then glanced over some old and contemporary books of poetry to stimulate my thought. In casually turning over the pages, my mind suddenly became keyed to inspiration. Verse poured from me, so that a few minutes later, when Mr. Hu returned, I had written some twenty poems. Suddenly I became aware of the danger in this and warned myself: "Notice, this is just what that devil-in-words, your habitual thought, is doing to you!" Immediately I stopped writing. I gave one of the poems to Mr. Kao and kept the rest of them secret. Nevertheless, I could not seem to stop the creative outflow I had started. It was as though all the poems, books, or sayings I had ever learned or seen in my life appeared simultaneously before me, cramming the space and air. Even had I had thousands of mouths all over my body, I could not have exhausted the word-flow. Confused, I could not discern which was my body and which was my mind. Observing myself, I felt as if I were about to fly away. I did not know what to do.

The next morning I thought to myself, "This is just what Master Fa Kuang calls the Zen-sickness. I am now right in the midst of it. Oh, who can cure me of it? Well, since there is no one here who can do so, the only thing for me to do is to sleep—to sleep as long and as soundly as I can. I will be lucky if I can sleep like that!" I then barred the door tightly and forced myself to sleep. Not being able to do so when reclining, I took a sitting posture. Before long I forgot that I was sitting and fell asleep, deeply and soundly. Some time later, the servant boy knocked on the door, but could not rouse me to answer. He tried to open the door, but found it fastened. When Mr. Hu returned home and learned of this, he ordered the boy to break in through the window. Finally, gaining entrance to



the room, they saw me sitting there unmoving. They called to me, but I did not respond. They tried shaking me, but could not move my body. Then Mr. Hu caught sight of a small bell which lay on a table. He remembered that I had once told him it was used in cases of emergency to wake a yogi from a deep trance. Immediately he held the bell to my ear and struck it lightly many times. Gradually I began to awaken. When I opened my eyes, I did not know where I was or why I was in that position. Mr. Hu said to me, "Since I left the other morning, your Reverence has been sitting in this room. That was five days ago!" I said, "Why, I thought only a single breath of time had passed." I sat silently and began to observe my surroundings, still not sure where I was. I then recalled my past experiences, and both they and the present ones seemed like events in a dream—no longer attainable or available. Whatever had troubled me had vanished like rain clouds before a clear sky. All space seemed as clear and transparent as if it had just been thoroughly washed. All images and shadows dropped away into the great, all-tranquil Voidness. My mind was so empty, the world so serene, my joy so great, that words could not describe it. I then composed the following poem:

When perfect stillness reigns,  
 True Illumination is reached.  
 Since serene reflection includes all space  
 I can look back on the world again,  
 Which is filled with nothing but dreams!  
 Oh, today I really understand  
 How true and how faithful is the teaching of Buddha!

In 1579 I was thirty-four years old. I devoted myself to copying the *sutras*. During this work, on every stroke of the character and on every mark of punctuation, I recited the Buddha's name once. Whenever monks or

laymen visited me in the temple, I would talk with them while still carrying on my work of copying. If anyone asked a question, I answered without hesitation. Nevertheless, my work was never hindered, nor did I make any mistakes in copying because of conversation. I did this every day as a routine, for not a trace of activity or quietness existed in my mind. This greatly surprised some neighbors, who were skeptical about it. So one day they sent many people to visit me and to do things purposely to distract my mind, and divert my attention from my copying work. After this visit I showed the copy to them; and when they found not a single mistake in it, they were all convinced. They questioned Miao Feng about my accomplishment. Miao Feng said, "Oh, this is nothing! It is simply because my friend is well-acquainted with this particular *sa-madhi*. That is all."

I always had some wonderful dreams when I stayed in the mountains while copying the *sutras*. One night I dreamed I entered into a diamond cave. On the gate of the cave, made of stone, was carved "The Temple of Great Wisdom." As I passed within, an immense space opened. Palatial mansions of indescribable magnificence stood before me. In the central mansion there was only one huge seat-bed, on which the Great Master Ching Liang lay, while my friend, Miao Feng, stood beside him as his attendant. At once I prostrated myself before him, and then stood on his left side. Great Master Ching Liang then preached for us the Hua Yen doctrine. First he expounded the inscrutable realm of the all-embracing Totality—the teaching of "Entering into the Dhar-madhatu." He explained how the myriad Buddha-lands are interpenetrating, and how the Principleship and Partnership are a mutual "turning-into" <sup>28</sup>—a state of going forward and coming back in steadfast immutability. As he commented, an actual picture illustrating



each topic appeared before us. Thereby I understood how body and mind mutually penetrate each other. After this demonstration Miao Feng asked, "What realm of experience is this?" The Master laughed and said, "This is the realm of No-domain." When I awoke from that dream I beheld my mind and body harmonious and transparent—empty of all hindrances and doubts.

Another night I dreamed that my body soared into the sky, floating up to the edgeless height of the firmament. Then gradually I descended to a place where I saw that nothing existed. There the ground shone transparent, like a great flat mirror of crystal. I gazed into the far, far distance where a huge mansion stood, so large that it filled the entire sky. All events and happenings, all peoples and their actions, including the trivia of the bazaars, were reflected from, and manifested within, that vast mansion. In the center stood a huge and high seat, purple in color. "This," I said to myself, "must be the precious *Vajra*-seat." <sup>29</sup> The splendor of that mansion was such that human imagination could not conceive it. Delighted at beholding such a wonderful scene, I wanted to approach it. Then I thought, "How is it that the impure and trivial things of the world can be manifest in this pure and heavenly mansion?" As soon as this thought arose, the mansion moved away from me. Then I said, "'Pure or impure' depends entirely on one's own mind!" Immediately the mansion appeared close at hand.

"After a while I noticed that many attendant monks, all large, graceful, and handsome, stood before the Great Seat. A monk suddenly came from behind the seat holding the scroll of a *sutra* in his hand and said to me, 'The Master is going to preach this *sutra*. He ordered me to give it to you.' I received the scroll and examined it, discovering that it was written in Sanskrit—a language I did not understand. I then asked the

monk, "Who is the Master?" He replied, "Maitreya Bodhisattva."<sup>30</sup> Following the monk, I ascended the steps to a high platform where I stood quietly with my eyes closed, feeling both excitement and delight. Hearing a chime ring, I opened my eyes to discover Bodhisattva Maitreya already in the Master's seat. I made my obeisance. His face shone with a golden radiance to which nothing in this world could compare. It was evident that I was the honored guest and that Bodhisattva Maitreya was to preach the *sutra* especially for me. I knelt down and opened the scroll, whereupon I heard him say, "That which discriminates is the consciousness; that which does not discriminate is the Wisdom. From relying on the consciousness, defilements come; from relying on the Wisdom, purity comes. From the defilements arise life-and-death. [If one realizes the purity] there are no Buddhas." Suddenly both my mind and body felt empty, and I awoke with his words still sounding in my ears. Thenceforth I understood thoroughly and clearly the differences between consciousness and Wisdom. I knew I had been visiting the Tushita Heaven—the palace of Maitreya.

On another night I had this dream: A monk addressed me, saying, "Bodhisattva Manjusre invites you to attend his bathing party at the North Mountain. Please follow me." I did so, and found myself in an immense temple hall filled with the fragrant smoke of incense. All the attendant monks were Indians. Then I was guided to the bathing quarter. After disrobing I was about to enter the pool when I noticed someone already there. Scrutinizing the figure more closely, I thought it was a woman. I hesitated in disgust, unwilling to enter the pool. The person in the pool then exposed his body further. I now discovered that the body was that of a man, not of a woman. I then entered the pool and



bathed with him. With his hand he scooped up water and poured it over my head. The water penetrated my head and body, flowing down into all the five viscera and cleansing them as one washes filth from meat and guts before cooking. My body was so thoroughly cleansed that all viscera had vanished; nothing was left of me except a frame of skin. My body became radiantly transparent, lucent as crystal.

Meanwhile the man in the pool had called out, "Bring me some tea!" An Indian monk then appeared, holding half a human skull, which looked like half a melon but dripped marrow and brains. Seeing my repugnance, the monk scooped some of the stuff from the skull with his hand, asking, "Is this impure?" Immediately he thrust the stuff into his mouth and swallowed it. He continued to scoop and swallow in this manner, as if drinking some sweet and delicious syrup. When only a little fluid and blood were left in the skull, the man in the pool said to the monk, "Now you can give him to drink." The monk handed me the skull-cup and I drank from it. It tasted like the most delicious nectar. After I had drunk it, liquid flowed through my whole system, reaching the tip of every hair in my body. When I had finished drinking the nectar, the Indian monk rubbed my back with his hand. Suddenly he gave me a hearty slap on my back and I awoke from the dream. My body was exuding fine sweat as if I had just bathed. From that time on my mind and body remained so light and comfortable that it is difficult to describe the feeling in words. I experienced auspicious dreams and omens very often. Through dreams I frequently contacted the holy Sages and heard the preachings of the Buddhas. More and more was I convinced of the truth of the Buddha's teaching.

In 1581 I was thirty-six years old. I vowed to call a great Congregation-for-Dharma. In the same year

Miao Feng wrote the complete *Hua Yen* [*Avatamsaka*] *Sutra* with his blood; he also wanted to form a non-discriminating Congregation-for-Dharma. For this purpose he went to the Capital to raise money. In a short while he had not only secured the money and provisions needed, but had also invited five hundred well-known Masters and monks from all over the country to attend the Congregation. All administrative matters, such as preparing the supplies and provisions, the quarters, and so forth, were handled by me alone. I was so occupied that I had no chance to sleep for ninety days and nights. On a certain day in October Miao Feng arrived with the five hundred monks. Altogether, the Congregation, inside and out, numbered about a thousand people. Their accommodations, supplies, and food were all in good order. No shortage or discrepancy occurred during this gathering.

In the first seven days we held a great prayer-convocation for sentient beings of the waters and lands. During this time I did not eat even a single grain of rice, but only drank water. Each day I took care of changing five hundred tables of offerings to Buddha, all in perfect order. People wondered how I could do it; they believed that I must have had some magic power. But actually, I knew that I was able to do this through the blessing of Buddha.

In 1582 I was thirty-seven years old. That spring I preached the *Hua Yen* philosophy for one hundred days. Listeners came from the ten directions to hear my talks; every day the audience numbered over ten thousand. We all ate at the same time and place, but no one made any noise or uttered a sound while eating. Everything in these meetings was conducted by me alone, thus exhausting my life energy. After the Convention, I checked the treasury. Some ten thousand units of money remained, which I handed over to the



temple. I then went away with Miao Feng, taking nothing with me but a begging bowl.

In 1586 I was forty-one years old. After a long period of traveling and working, I was able to reside quietly in a newly constructed meditation lodge of my own. Both my mind and body relaxed so that I began to feel wonderfully happy. One evening during meditation I clearly saw the great Illuminating-Whole, pellucid, transparent, void, and clear like a limpid ocean—nothing at all existed! Whereupon I uttered the following stanza:

The limpid ocean shines clear and void,  
Bright as moonlight mirrored in white snow.  
No trace of men or gods remains.  
Oh, when the eye of *Vajra* opens  
The mirage disappears;  
The great earth vanishes into the realm of tranquility!

After this experience I returned to my room. Upon my desk lay the *Leng Yen* [*Surangama*] *Sutra*. Casually I opened it, and came across the following sentences:

"You will then see that both your body and mind, together with the mountains, rivers, space, and earth of the outward world, are all within the wonderful, illumined, and true Mind."

Suddenly the gist of the whole *sutra* was clearly understood in my mind and appeared vividly before my eyes. Whereupon I dictated a thesis called "The Mirror of Leng Yen," within the time measured by burning half a candle. I had just finished when the meditation hall opened. Calling the administrative monk in, I let him read the thesis I had just written. As I listened to his reading I felt as if I were hearing words from a dream.

In 1589 I was forty-four years old. In this year I

began reading the complete *Tripitaka*. Also, I lectured on the *Lotus Sutra* and on *The Awakening of Faith*.

Ever since I left the Wu Tai Mountain I had thought of visiting my parents, but I was afraid of being blinded by worldly attachments. I then carefully examined myself to determine whether I would be able to visit my parents. One evening during meditation, I casually uttered the following stanza:

Waves and ripples flow  
In the cool sky;  
Fish and birds swim  
In one mirror:  
On and on, day after day.  
Last night the moon fell from the heavens.  
Now is the time to illumine  
The black dragon's pearl.<sup>31</sup>

At once I called my attendant and said to him, "Now I can return to my native land to see my parents!"

The Temple of Gratitude in my home district had, for some time, been applying for the gift of a complete set of the *Tripitaka*. In October I went to the capital to make an appeal for my countrymen. A complete set of the *Tripitaka* was granted by the Emperor as a gift. I escorted the *sutras* from the capital to Lung Chiang, arriving at my home temple in November. Before my arrival the pagoda of the temple inexplicably and continuously shone with a light for some days. On the day when the *sutras* arrived the mysterious light emanating from the pagoda assumed the shape of a rainbow bridge stretching from the heavens down to the ground. The monks who came to welcome the *sutras* all walked through this light. Throughout all the ceremonies and prayers for installing the *sutras*, the light shone each day without interruption. Spectators, numbering more than ten thousand a day, came from all directions to



witness this miracle. All considered it a rare and auspicious sign.

Meanwhile my old mother had heard of my coming. She sent messengers to ask me when I would visit my home. In reply I said that I had been sent by the Court to escort the *sutras*, not just to go home. However, if my mother could see me in a pleasant manner without grief or sorrow, as if I had never left her, then I would stay for two nights. When my mother heard these words, she exclaimed. "This is [an unexpected] meeting, like finding someone of yours in another incarnation! Overwhelmed with joy, how shall I find time for sorrow? Oh, I shall be quite content to see him, if only for a little while. Two nights at home is far more than I had expected!"

When I reached home my mother was overjoyed. She showed no sign of grief whatsoever. In her I beheld only joy and good cheer. This surprised me very much.

In the evening the elders from among our relatives came in. One of them asked, "Did you come by boat or by land?" My mother immediately answered him, "What do you mean, 'come by boat or by land'?" "What I really want to know," he said, "is from *whence* did he come home?" My mother replied, "From the Void he returns to us." I was surprised to hear her speak so. In my astonishment I said, "No wonder this old woman could give me away to the priesthood!" I then asked her, "Have you thought of me since I left home?" She said, "Of course! How could I not think of you?" I then asked, "But how did you console yourself?" She replied, "At first I did not know what to do. Then I was told that you were at the Wu Tai Mountain. I asked a priest where this was, and he told me it was just under the North Star. I then made obeisance to the North Star and recited the Bodhisattva's name. After this I felt much better and thought of you no more. Later I just

presumed that you were dead—for me no more prostrations, no more thought of you. Now I see you as if in another incarnation.”

The next morning I visited the graves of my ancestors to pay my respects. I also chose the site for the graves of my parents. At that time my father was eighty years old. I amused him by saying, “Today I bury you, and so save you the trouble of returning to this earth again.” Saying this, I struck the ground with a pick. Immediately my mother snatched it away from me and said, “Let this old woman do the grave-digging herself. I do not need anyone to bother for me.” She then began digging up the ground in a lively fashion.

I remained at home three days. When the time for departure came my old mother was still in a very cheerful mood. Not until then did I become fully aware that I had a very unusual woman for a mother!

## 2. *Zen Master Wu Wen's Story*

When I first saw Master Tou Weng he taught me to work on [the koan], “It is neither mind, nor Buddha, nor any thing.” Later Yun Feng and Yueh Shan and I, with several others, vowed to help each other in our striving for the Ultimate Enlightenment. Still later I went to see Huai Shi, who taught me to work on the “Wu”<sup>32</sup> word. Then I journeyed to Chang Lu, where I practiced with my companion. When I met Chin of Huai Shang, he asked me, “You have practiced for six or seven years now; what have you understood?” I answered, “Every day I just feel that there is nothing in my mind.” Seeing that I had no true understanding, he asked, “From what source has your understanding been derived?” I was not sure whether I really knew the truth or not, so I dared not answer. He then said



to me, "You can hold to your Work in quietness, but you lose it during activity." This alarmed me, for he had hit my weak spot. "What should one do," I inquired, "to understand this matter?" Chin answered. "Have you never heard what Chung Lao Tze said?"

To understand this,  
Face South to see the Dipper.

Upon saying this, he left me abruptly.

As a result I became unconscious of walking when I walked and of sitting when I sat. I put aside the practice on the "Wu" *Hua Tou* for a week and concentrated my mind on trying to understand what in heaven's name he had meant by "facing South to see the Dipper." One day, when I came to the Hall of Service and sat with a group of monks, the "doubt-sensation" stuck with me and refused to dissolve. The time for dinner came and passed. Suddenly I felt my mind become bright, void, light, and transparent, my human thoughts broke into pieces like skin peeling, as if I had merged in the Void, and I saw neither person nor thing appearing before me. I returned to consciousness about half an hour later and found that my body was running with sweat. Immediately I understood the meaning of seeing the Dipper by facing South. I went to see Chin. Whatever questions he put to me I could answer without hindrance or difficulty; also, I could compose stanzas freely and effortlessly. However, I still had not stripped myself to the point of reaching the state of "leaping one step upward."

Later I went to Hsiang Yen's place in the mountains to spend the summer. The mosquitoes which infested the region bit me terribly. I had to move my hands continually to keep them away. Then I thought, "If the men in ancient times had sacrificed their bodies for

the sake of Dharma, should I be afraid of mosquitoes?" With this in mind I tried to relax and endure the pests. With fists clenched and teeth tight I concentrated my mind solely on the "Wu" word, bearing the continuously repeated stings of the mosquitoes with the utmost patience. Soon I felt both my mind and body sink quietly down like a house whose four walls had fallen. The state was like the Voidness; no attribute can be ascribed to it. I had sat down in the early morning, and it was not until afternoon that I arose from this period of meditation. Thereupon I knew for certain that Buddhism never misleads us or lets us down.

Although my understanding was then quite clear, it had not yet come to the point of full maturity. I still possessed slight, subtle, hidden, and unnoticeable wrong thoughts which had not been completely exhausted. Going to the mountain at Kwung Chou, I meditated for six years there, for another six on the mountain of Lu Han, and for three more at Kuang Chou. Not until then did I gain my emancipation.

### *3. Zen Master Hsueh Yen's Story*

Time does not wait for people. Swiftly the next incarnation will be upon you. Therefore, why do you not try to understand [Zen] and study in earnest with a humble mind to make it transparently clear throughout? How fortunate you are to live here, surrounded by famous mountains and great lakes! How lucky you are to find yourself in a world full of Dharmas and great Masters! Your monastery is clean and neat, the food good and nourishing. Water and firewood abound nearby. If you do not use this hard-to-find opportunity to understand [Zen] clearly and thoroughly, you are squandering your life. You are sinking yourself in self-



abandonment and willingly abasing yourself to become a low, stupid person. If you feel ignorant about this teaching, why do you not question the elders extensively and ponder on what they say to discover the meaning?

I had joined the priesthood at the age of five. When I overheard my teacher discussing this matter with his guests and visitors, then I knew that there was such a thing as Zen, and immediately I had faith in it. Soon I began to learn how to meditate. At sixteen I was ordained, and at seventeen I started travel-for-study visits.<sup>33</sup> At the dwelling place of the Master Yuan of Shuang Lin I joined the congregation-for-meditation. From dawn to sunset I never left room or court. Even when I entered the dormitory, I just crossed my hands within my big sleeves and looked straight ahead without seeing anything to the right or to the left. I fixed my eyes on a spot about three feet ahead of me. In the beginning I observed the word "Wu." One day I suddenly turned my mind inward, seeking to discover where and how the thought first arose. Instantly I felt as if my mind had become frozen. It became clear, serene, and limpid, neither moving nor shaking. The whole day seemed like a passing second. I did not even hear the sounds of drums and bells, which occurred at regular intervals in the monastery.

When I was nineteen I stayed at the Lin Yin Monastery as a visiting monk. Meanwhile, I had received a letter from Chu Chou which said, "Dear Chin, your Zen is a dead Zen. That which you have been working on is like dead water—useless. Your work is to divide activity and inactivity into two. The important thing in Zen work [*tsen Zen*] is to arouse the feeling of "inquiry-doubt" [*I chin*].<sup>34</sup> A small inquiry-doubt will bring a small enlightenment, and a greater inquiry-doubt will bring forth a great enlightenment." Chu Chou's words hit the mark. I then changed my *Hua Tou* from "Wu" to the "Dry Dung," and continued my observa-

tion. Observing the *Hua Tou* from different angles, I constantly doubted this and doubted that. As a result I was besieged by drowsiness and errant thoughts. I could not hold a single moment of peace in my mind.

I then went to Chin Tsu Monastery and banded together with seven brethren of Dharma there. We vowed to meditate in a most strict manner. We put aside our quilts and refused to lie down on our beds. The chief monk, Brother Hsiu, remained outside [our room]. Every day, when he sat down on the meditation seat, he appeared as steady and immovable as an iron pole thrust into the ground. When he walked he opened his eyes and dropped his arms so that he still looked like an iron pole. No one could become intimate or talk with him.

For two years I did not lie down. Then one day I became so tired that I gave up and lay down and had a good sleep. Two months passed before I collected myself and was ready to work again. The relaxation I had had in those two months refreshed me. I felt very vigorous and lively. From this experience I learned that if one wants to understand this matter he cannot go completely without sleep. A sound sleep at midnight is necessary to refresh oneself.

One day I noticed the chief monk, Hsiu, by the balustrade. This was the first time I had had an opportunity to speak with him. "For the past year I have wanted to talk to you. Why do you always avoid me?" I asked. Hsiu replied, "One who really practices the Tao has no time even to cut his nails. Who has the leisure to talk to you?" I then asked him what to do about the drowsiness and errant thoughts which afflicted me. He said, "These things happen because you are not earnest enough. You should sit erect on your seat, keep your spine straight, make your whole body and mind become one *Hua Tou*, and pay no attention to drowsiness or wild thoughts." Working in accord with his



instructions, I unknowingly forgot both my body and mind—even their very existence. For three days and three nights my mind stayed so serene and clear that I never closed my eyes for a single moment. On the afternoon of the third day I walked through the three gates<sup>35</sup> of the monastery as if I were sitting. Again I came across Hsiu. "What are you doing here?" he asked. "Working on the Tao," I answered. He then said, "What is this you call the Tao?" Not able to answer him, I became more confused and perplexed. With the intention of meditating further I turned back toward the meditation hall. But accidentally I met Hsiu again. He said, "Just open your eyes and see what it is!" After this admonishment I was even more anxious to return to the meditation hall than before. As I was just going to sit down, something broke abruptly before my face as if the ground were sinking away. I wanted to tell how I felt, but I could not express it. Nothing in this world can be used as a simile to describe it. Immediately I went to find Hsiu. As soon as he saw me he said, "Congratulations! Congratulations!" Holding my hand, he led me out of the monastery. We walked along the river dike, which was full of willow trees. I looked up at the sky and down at the earth. [I actually felt] that all phenomena and manifestations, the things I saw with my eyes and heard with my ears, the things that disgusted me—including the passion-desires and the blindnesses—all flowed out from my own bright, true, and marvelous mind. During the next fortnight no moving phenomena appeared in my mind.

Unfortunately, at that time I had no advanced Zen Master to instruct me. Thus I mistakenly lingered in such a state for many years. This is the so-called state wherein "The view is not thorough, therefore it hinders genuine understanding." I could not hold the "view" while sleeping. [Literally: "During the state of sleep, it (the view) broke into two pieces."] At this stage I

could grasp the koans that were intelligible, but whenever I met any of those impenetrable "silver-mountain-like" and "iron-wall-like" koans, I could not understand them at all. Although I had practiced for many years under my deceased teacher, Wu Chun, none of his private discussions or public talks struck my heart. None of the Zen books or *sutras* meant much to me. This obstacle was an oppression within my heart and breast for ten years. Then one day, when I was walking in the hall of Tien Mou Monastery, I lifted my head and saw a cypress tree standing before me. Suddenly, in a flash, I understood. The experience heretofore gained and the obstacle weighing upon my heart and breast all melted away. The feeling was akin to experiencing the bright sun shining suddenly into a dark room. From that time on I had no doubts about birth and death, no questions about Buddha and the Patriarchs. Then when I saw where that old man, Chin Shan, stood, I gave him thirty blows!

#### 4. Zen Master Meng Shan's Story

When I was twenty years old I already knew of this matter [Zen]. [From that time on] until I was thirty-two, I studied with some eighteen elders to learn how actually to practice Zen. Nevertheless, I received no clear-cut teaching from them. Later I studied with the elder of Wan Shan, who taught me to observe the "Wu" word. In doing so he said that one should, in the twelve periods of a day, be ever alert like a cat waiting to catch a mouse, or like a hen intent on hatching an egg, never letting up on the task. Until one is fully and thoroughly enlightened, he should keep on working uninterruptedly, like a mouse gnawing at a coffin. If one can keep practicing in such a manner, in time he will



definitely discover [the Truth]. Following these instructions, I meditated and contemplated diligently day and night for eighteen days. Then, while I was drinking a cup of tea, I suddenly understood the purport of Buddha's holding up the flower and of Mahakasyapa's smile to him. Delight overwhelmed me. I questioned three or four elders about my experience, but they said nothing. Several of the elders told me to identify my experience with the Ocean-seal *Samadhi*<sup>30</sup> and to disregard all else. Their advice led me to an easy confidence in myself.

Two years after this, in the month of July during the Fifth Year of Chin Din [1264], I contracted dysentery at Chungking in Szechuan Province. My bowels moved a hundred times a day and brought me to the brink of death. All my former understanding became useless, and the so-called Ocean-seal *Samadhi* did not help me in the least. I had a body, but I could not move. I possessed a mouth, but I could not speak. I lay down, just waiting for death. All the Karmas and other fearful hallucinations appeared simultaneously before me. Frightened, puzzled, and lost, I felt crushed, annihilated under pressures and miseries.

With the thought of approaching death before me, I forced myself to make a will, and so disposed of all my worldly affairs. This accomplished, I slowly pulled myself up, burned a full censer of incense, and seated myself steadily on a high seat. There I prayed silently to the Three Precious Ones and the Gods in the Heavens, repenting before them of all the sinful deeds I had committed in life. I then made my last petition: If my life is about to end, I wish through the power of *Prajna* and a sober state of mind that I may reincarnate in a favorable place, wherein I may become a monk at an early age. If by chance I recover from this sickness, I will renounce the world, become a monk, and strive to bring enlightenment to young Buddhists everywhere.

Having made this vow, I then took up the "Wu" word and observed it inwardly. Before long my bowels rolled and twisted a number of times, but I ignored them. After I had sat for a long while, I felt my eyelids become fixed steadfastly. Again a long period of time elapsed in which I did not feel the presence of my body at all. There was nothing but the *Hua Tou* continuously presenting itself in my mind. It was not until night that I rose from my seat. I had half recovered from my illness. I sat again and meditated until after midnight. By then my recovery was complete. Both my body and my mind felt comfortable and light.

In August I went to Chiang Ning and joined the priesthood. There I remained in the monastery for one year; then I started my visiting journey. On this journey, I cooked my own food. Only then did I realize that the Zen task should be worked out at one stretch. It should never be interrupted.

Later I stayed at the Yellow Dragon Monastery. When I sat in meditation the first time I became drowsy, but I alerted myself and overcame it. I felt drowsy a second time, and alerted myself again to overcome it. When the drowsiness came for the third time, I felt very, very sleepy indeed. Then I got down and prostrated myself before Buddha, trying in different ways to pass the time. I returned to my seat again. With everything arranged, I decided to surmount my drowsiness once and for all. First I slept for a short while with a pillow, then with my head on my arm. Next I dozed without lying down. For two or three nights I struggled on in this way, feeling sleepy all day and evening. My feet seemed not to be standing on the ground, but floating in the air. Then suddenly the dark clouds before my eyes opened. My whole body felt comfortable and light as if I had just had a warm bath. Meanwhile the "doubt-sensation" in my mind became more and more intensified. Without effort it automati-



cally and incessantly appeared before me. Neither sounds, views, nor desires and cravings could penetrate my mind. It was like the clear sky of autumn or like pure snow filling a silver cup. Then I thought to myself, "This is all very well, but no one here can give me advice or resolve these things for me." Whereupon I left the monastery and went to Che Chiang.

On the way I suffered great hardships, so that my work was retarded. On arrival I stayed with Master Ku Chan of Chin Tien, and made a vow that I would attain Enlightenment or never leave the monastery. After meditation for one month I regained the work lost on the journey; but meanwhile my whole body became covered with growing boils. These I ignored, and stressed my work, even to the point of disregarding my own life. In this way I could work better and gain more improvement. Thus I learned how to work in sickness.

One day I was invited out for dinner. On my way I took up the *Hua Tou* and worked at it, and thereby, without realizing it, I passed my host's house. Thus I learned how to keep up my work in activity. When I reached this state, the feeling was like the moon in the water—transparent and penetrating. Impossible to disperse or obliterate by rolling surges, it was inspiring, alive, and vivid all the time.

On the sixth of March, while I was meditating on the "Wu" word, the Chief Monk came into the hall to burn incense. He struck the incense box, making some noise. Suddenly and abruptly I recognized myself, and caught and defeated Chao Chou.<sup>37</sup> Whereupon I composed this stanza:

In despair I reached the dead end of the road;  
I stamped upon the wave,  
[But] it was only water.  
Oh, that outstanding old Chao Chou,  
His face is as plain as this!

In the autumn I saw Hsueh Yen at Ling An, as well as Tui Keng, Shih Keng, Hsu Chou, and other great elders. Hsu Chou advised me to consult Wan Shan, which I did. Wan Shan asked me: "Is not the saying, 'The glowing light shines serenely over the river sands,' a prosaic remark by that foolish scholar Chang?" I was just about to answer when Master Shan shouted at me, "Get out!" From that moment I was not interested in anything; I felt insipid and dull at all times, and in all activities.

Six months passed. One day in the spring of the next year I came back to the city from a journey. While climbing some stone steps I suddenly felt all the doubts and obstacles that were weighing me down melt away like thawing ice. I did not feel that I was walking the road with a physical body. Immediately, I went to see Master Shan. He asked me the same question that he had put before. In answer I just turned his bed upside down onto the ground. Thus, one by one, I understood some of the most obscure and misleading koans.

Friends, if you want to practice Zen, you must be extremely earnest and careful. If I had not caught dysentery in Chungking, I would probably have frittered my whole life away. The important thing is to meet the right teacher and to have a right view. This is why in olden times teachers were searched for in all possible ways, and their advice sought day and night. For only through this earnest approach may one clear away his doubts, and be assured of the authenticity of his Zen experience and understanding.

### *5. Zen Master Kao Feng's Story*

To understand this matter [Zen] requires great determination and earnestness, for as soon as you have them,



the real doubt-sensation will arise. [At times] you will doubt this and doubt that—the doubt automatically and instinctively arising by itself. From dawn to dusk it sticks to you from your head to your feet. It becomes one whole, continuous piece which will not be dislodged, no matter how hard you attempt to shake it. Even though you try to push it away, it will still persist in sticking to you. At all times it manifests itself clearly before you. Now this is when you can progress. On reaching this stage one should keep his mind straight and refrain from having secondary thoughts. When one finds himself not knowing that he is walking while walking or sitting while sitting, and unconscious of cold, heat, hunger—then he is about to reach home [Enlightenment]. Henceforth he will be able to catch up and hold on. [He does not have to do anything] but wait until the time comes. But do not let this remark influence you to wait idly, nor excite you to exert yourself—striving for such a state with anxious mind. Nor should you just let go and give up. Rather, you should preserve your mindfulness, keeping it steady until you reach Enlightenment. At times you will encounter eighty-four thousand soldier demons waiting their chance before the gate of your six organs.<sup>38</sup> The projections of your mind will appear before you in the guise of good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, strange or astonishing visions. The slightest clinging to these things will entrap you into enslavement to their commands and directions. You will then talk and act as a devil. Thenceforth the right cause of *Prajna* will die away forever, and the seed of *Bodhi* will never sprout. At such a time you should refrain from stirring up your mind, and should make yourself like a living corpse. Then, as you hold on and on, suddenly and abruptly you will feel as though you were being crushed to pieces. You will then

reach a state which will frighten the heavens and shake the earth.

I joined the priesthood at fifteen and was ordained at twenty, staying at the monastery of Chin Tzu. I vowed to learn Zen within three years. First I worked under Master Tuan Chiao. He taught me to work on the *Hua Tou*, "Where was I before birth, and where will I be after death?" [I followed his instructions and practiced, but could not concentrate my mind because of the bifurcation in this very *Hua Tou*.] My mind was also scattered.

Later I saw Master Hsueh Yen. He taught me to observe the "Wu" word. He also requested me to report to him each day. Explaining that this was like setting out on a journey, he said one should find out every day what progress one had made. Because his explanations were so systematic and understandable, [I became so dependent on him that] I did not make any effort in my own work. One day, when I had just entered his room, he said to me, "Who has dragged this corpse here for you?" He had hardly finished this sentence when he chased me out of his room.

Later I followed the example of Chin Shan and stayed in the meditation hall. One day in a dream I suddenly remembered the koan, "All things are reducible to one, but to what is the one reducible?" At that moment a "doubt-sensation" abruptly arose within me so that I did not know east from west or north from south. During the sixth day in this state, while I was chanting prayers with the assembly, I lifted my head and saw the last two sentences of the stanza composed by the Fifth Patriarch, Fa Yan:<sup>39</sup>

Oh, it is you, the fellow  
I have known all the time,  
Who goes and returns  
In the thirty thousand days of one hundred years!



Immediately I broke up the sentence: "Who has dragged this corpse here for you?" (For it had stuck in my mind since the day Master Hsueh Yen had put it before me.) I felt as if my spirit had been extinguished and my mind blown away and then revived again from death itself. It was like dropping the burden of a carrying pole weighing twenty pounds! I was then twenty-four years old, and so had achieved my original wish to realize Zen within three years.

Afterwards I was asked, "Can you master yourself in the bright daytime?" I answered, "Yes, I can." "Can you master yourself when dreaming?" Again my answer was, "Yes, I can." "Where, in dreamless sleep, is the Master?" To this question I had no answer or explanation. The Master said to me, "From now on I do not want you to study Buddhism or learn the Dharma, nor to study anything, either old or new. I just want you to eat when you are hungry and to sleep when you are tired. As soon as you wake from sleep, alert your mind and ask yourself, "Who is the very Master of this awakening, and where does he rest his body and lead his life?"

I then made up my mind that I would understand this thing in one way or another even though it meant that I should appear to be an idiot for the rest of my life. Five years passed. One day, when I was questioning this matter while sleeping, my brother monk who slept beside me in the dormitory pushed his pillow so that it fell with a heavy thump to the floor. At that moment my doubts were suddenly broken up. I felt as if I had jumped out of a trap. All the puzzling koans of the Masters and the Buddhas and all the different issues and events of both present and ancient times became transparently clear to me. Henceforth all things were settled; nothing under the sun remained but peace.

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Problems

of Zen

Buddhism

There is a growing interest in Zen Buddhism which has given rise to much misunderstanding in the West. More Westerners, after reading a few books on the subject, treat it as a pastime or a topic of conversation. Some may be serious enough to study Zen, but reach hasty conclusions from the meager sources available to them in English and other European languages. A few even practice meditation with high hopes of Enlightenment, or at least of having some interesting experiences, after a few hours' work. They are content to dream of "here and now," of the easily reached "Enlightenment" of "I am God and an ass," and the like.

Most Western students have merely reached the stage in which they feel empty of spirit and confused in mind by the endless "jargon" of Zen. This, however, is a normal state for beginners in the East as well. Before these misunderstandings can be cleared up, fresh in-



formation is needed, and four vital questions must be raised and answered.

1. Is Zen as completely unintelligible and beyond the reach of human understanding as some recent books make out?

2. What is "Zen Enlightenment"? Is it the "perfect Enlightenment" of orthodox Buddhism? Is it a once-and-for-all experience, or is it many experiences? If the latter, how do these experiences differ from each other in essence, or in depth?

3. How does Zen teaching compare with that of Yogacara and Madhyamika, the two main schools of thought in Mahayana Buddhism?

4. Is there, beneath the surface of the seemingly irrational Zen koans, any system, order, or category which, when understood, will make Zen intelligible?

### *Is Zen Completely Unintelligible?*

The fate of Zen as vital knowledge and spiritual truth depends upon how this question is answered, for if—as some authors have repeatedly emphasized—Zen is incomprehensible and irrational, how can any human being understand it? If all conceptual knowledge and intellection have to be abandoned, the enlightened Zen Masters of the past must have been complete fools.

But history shows otherwise. These Masters were wiser than the average, not only in their knowledge of Zen, but also in many other subjects as well. Their brilliant achievements in art, literature, and philosophy were indisputably of the first order, and stand out prominently in all fields of Chinese culture. Then it is possible that the mistake in presenting Zen made by some

authors lies in their failure to distinguish between "to understand" and "to realize." To understand a thing does not mean to realize it. To understand Zen through an intellectual approach should not be confused with the direct realization of Zen Truth. Thus what they ought to have said is not that "to understand Zen," but, instead, that "to realize Zen," "one must abandon all he has acquired by way of conceptual knowledge" (in certain stages). To understand the wonderfully cold, sweet, and palatable taste of ice cream is not to have actually experienced that taste. To understand it as cold, sweet, and palatable, but not bitter, hot, or pungent is comparable to understanding Zen as being direct rather than indirect, immediate rather than abstract, and transcendent rather than dualistic.

Any student of Buddhism knows that "to understand" <sup>n</sup> is very different from "to realize." <sup>o</sup> The former belongs to the domain of "indirect measurement," <sup>p</sup> the latter to that of "direct discernment." <sup>q</sup> To confuse these two categories is almost comparable to a man's saying to a solemn priest of his church that Jesus Christ is merely "a stick of dry dung!" I am sure this man would be driven out of his church; but, of course, not in the sense of Zen!

To understand Zen through an intellectual approach is not "reprehensible," but is the only way possible for the beginner, for who can get into Zen without having first some understanding or "conceptual knowledge" about it? There is no exception to this for anyone.

A complete denial of the value of intellection is obviously unsound from the viewpoint of philosophy, religion, and Zen—especially Zen. For if Zen is to be considered, as it indeed is, the essence of Buddhism through which the ultimate Truth is expressed, it must be obstruction-free<sup>r</sup> and all-inclusive.<sup>s</sup> This agrees with Hua Yen philosophy which states explicitly that if the



ultimate Truth is ubiquitous and all-pervading, it must be all-inclusive and free from all obstructions. Thus even the stick of dry dung is found with the Buddha. The mountain is a mountain and water is water; when hungry I eat, and when sleepy I sleep; the birds sing and the fish swim. What is wrong, then, with intellection and conceptual knowledge? Are they not included in the great *Tao*? Are they not acts in the marvelous play of Buddhahood? Are not both intuition and intellection equally glorious and indispensable in the great drama of *Dharmadhatu* (the all-embracing Totality)?

From the ultimate viewpoint of Zen, what excuse can we have, then, to favor one and detest the other?

*What Zen objects to is not intellection or conceptual knowledge as such, but clinging to intellection, or to conceptualization within the clinging pattern.*

Now let us see how Zen deals with human clinging.

Hsiang Yen (9th century) once posed this problem to his disciples: "A man climbs a tree and is hanging from a branch by his teeth, his limbs suspended in the air without any support, when someone asks him: 'What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from the West?' If the man does not answer, he falls short of replying; but if he does, he will fall from the tree and lose his life. At this moment what should he do?"

This interesting koan can be interpreted in two ways. First, it is typical of the technique often used by the Zen Masters to compel the disciple to retreat to the dead end of the tracks which his habitual thinking and associations have always followed, thus setting up a condition in which he has no way of allowing his thoughts to function. Then, by pushing the disciple one step beyond to the unknown, the Master may open his wisdom eye. Second, if we look upon this koan metaphorically, it reminds us of the ever grasping or clinging nature of the human mind. It is indeed true that

we as humans must have something to hold or to cling to all the time. It seems unthinkable to us that the mind can function without having an object to think about. Never for a single moment can we do without an object to make mental or physical activity possible.

Furthermore, on most occasions we must have more than one object to grasp or cling to. If we lose one we can always resort to another: a blind man always falls back on his senses of hearing and touch; a frustrated lover resorts to drink or religion or something of the sort. But Zen Masters always drive us to the absolute dead-end state, where we have nothing to grasp, cling to, or escape from. It is right here, at this point of desperation, that we must give up our habitual clinging for the Absolute Great Release, and it is right here that we must withdraw from the last ditch of our thought-tracks and surrender, with both hands empty, with nothing for them to hold onto, before we can jump into the unknown abyss of Buddhahood.

To confirm the statement that intellection itself is not to be condemned, but that it is, rather, the *clinging* that is objected to by Buddhist sages, I now quote the famous saying of Tilopa, the Indian Guru who indirectly founded the *bkah-rgyud-pa* (Kagyutpa) school in Tibet, when he preached for his disciple Naropa beside the river Ganges on the teaching of Mahamudra:

It is not the manifestations that have bound you in  
*Sangsara,*

It is the clinging that has tied you down.

Oh, it is the clinging that made you—Naropa! <sup>1</sup>

It is true that Zen emphasizes direct experience and denounces mere intellection, which is essentially abstract and indirect. Zen Masters were unwilling to encourage



speculation on Zen if they could help it. They disliked speaking too plainly about what they understood, for if they did so people would simply form another notion about Zen which would lead back into the old vicious circle of intellection and philosophy. Thus to use any method or trick which would bring the disciple directly to the point and never to speak too plainly<sup>2</sup> about Zen became the unique "tradition of Zen" cherished with pride by all its followers. This does not mean that Zen Masters were always obscure in their remarks. Contrary to present belief in the West, they spoke very plainly and sincerely on most occasions. Even the heroes of the extremists like Ma Tsu and Lin Chi were plain and understandable on many occasions. Their instructions remind one of some good-hearted minister preaching in simple words with great sincerity. This is because Zen is most practical. It cares only to bring the individual directly to Enlightenment. However, since individuals vary greatly in their capacities and aptitudes, Zen Masters must use different methods and teachings for different individuals in different circumstances. And so Zen styles and expressions vary greatly, from the most enigmatic and irrational koans to the plainest and most understandable instructions. The ironic fact is that, though Zen claims to be a "special transmission outside the scriptures with no dependence upon words and letters," Zen monks wrote many more books than those of any other Buddhist sect in China.

Concluding the discussion of the first question, my answer is this:

1. Zen is not altogether beyond the reach of human understanding.
2. The "realization of Zen" comes through "understanding Zen."
3. Ultimately, it is utterly wrong to exclude or de-

grade any Dharma. This, of course, includes intellection and conceptual knowledge, for they are embraced by and are identical with the supreme Buddhahood.<sup>3</sup>

4. The abandonment of conceptual knowledge is only temporary, being a practical means, not a strived-for aim.

5. Intellection is rejected by Zen Masters only for certain types of individuals at certain stages.

### *What Is Zen "Enlightenment"?*

"Enlightenment," or *Wu*, is the heart of Zen; but what is this *Wu* <sup>4</sup> experience, and is it one, or many?

The plain answer is given in the following tentative definition of *Wu*: *Wu is the direct experience of beholding, unfolding, or realizing the Mind-essence in its fullness.* In essence it is illuminating yet void, serene yet dynamic, transcending yet immanent, free yet all-embracing. *Wu* experiences are one and also many—one because they are identical in essence; many because they differ in depth, clearness, and proficiency. This gives a brief idea of the meaning and nature of *Wu*.

Now, before examining the *Wu* experience further, let us first examine the meaning of the Chinese word *Wu*. *Wu* means "to awaken to the fact," or, loosely, "to understand." The use of this word as shown in the Zen tradition to denote the inner experiences of the awakening to the *Prajna*-truth (the truth realized through transcendental Wisdom) is not the same as that of *Cheng-teng-chueh* (*Samyaksambodhi*), which is the final and perfect Enlightenment of Buddhahood. Ch'an Buddhists in China seldom talk of *Cheng-chueh* (*Sambodhi*) or speak of their Ch'an experience as *Chueh* (*Bodhi*). Although *Chueh* and *Wu* are very close, a difference still exists between them. *Wu* refers more to



the awakening experience in its immediate sense, while *Chueh* denotes permanent and complete Enlightenment. For instance, *Ta-chueh* is used only in reference to the Buddha and is seldom applied even to the celebrated Ch'an Masters except in a complimentary sense in honorary titles. There are many other reasons which verify the *Wu* experiences as being different from the final, perfect, and complete Enlightenment of Buddhahood as generally understood. The frequent use of *Wu* instead of *Chueh* by the Ch'an Buddhists illustrates this point.

Since *Wu* is in the main an experience of awakening to *Prajna*-truth, the person who attains this *Wu* experience may not be able fully to master, deepen, and mature it. A great deal of work is needed to cultivate this vast and bottomless *Prajna*-mind before it will blossom fully. It takes a long time, before perfection is reached, to remove the dualistic, selfish, and deeply rooted habitual thoughts arising from the passions. This is very clearly shown in many Zen stories, and in the following Zen proverb, for example: "The truth should be understood through sudden Enlightenment, but the fact [the complete realization] must be cultivated step by step."<sup>5</sup>

Thus Zen Enlightenment, or *Wu*, varies greatly, from the shallow glimpse of the Mind-essence of beginners to full Buddhahood as realized by the Buddha and a few advanced Zen Masters. However, these experiences are different only in degree of profundity, not in essence or in basic principle. To understand Zen Buddhism, therefore, one should study the works relating to this subject, such as the Oxherding Pictures, the Principle of the Three,<sup>†</sup> the Five Positions of the King and the Minister,<sup>‡</sup> the Four Distinctions of Lin Chi,<sup>‡</sup> and other sources, with their commentaries. Without some understanding of these theses, one can hardly expect to understand Zen even in a superficial way.

In order to give the Western reader a more genuine picture of how Zen Enlightenment actually takes place, I here translate a short autobiography of Tieh Shan, in which he recounts his personal experience of *Wu* during his long striving for Enlightenment. This is first-hand information, which is better than any explanation or description given by learned but inexperienced scholars.

Tieh Shan writes:

"I knew Buddhism from the time I was thirteen. At the age of eighteen I joined the priesthood . . . then one day I read a thesis brought by a monk from Hsueh Yen, called 'Advance on Meditation.' This made me aware that I had not yet reached the stage in question. Therefore I went to Hsueh Yen and followed his instruction in meditating on the one word *Wu*. On the fourth night sweat exuded all over my body, and I felt very comfortable and light. I remained in the meditation hall concentrating on my meditation without talking to anyone. After that I saw Miao Kao Feng, who told me to continue meditating on the word *Wu* without a moment of interruption, day or night. When I got up before dawn the *Hua Tou* ("the essence of the sentence")<sup>6</sup> immediately presented itself before me. As soon as I felt a little sleepy I left the seat and descended to the ground. The *Hua Tou* remained with me even while I was walking, preparing my bed and food, picking up my spoon, or laying down the chopsticks. It was with me all the time in all my activities, day and night. If one can fuse his mind into one whole, continuous piece, he cannot help but attain Enlightenment. As a result of following this advice I became fully convinced of my actual arrival at such a state. On the twentieth of March, Master Yen addressed the congregation:

" 'My dear brothers, it is of no use to feel sleepy while sitting for a long time on your meditation seat. If you are



sleepy, you should leave the seat, walk about, and wash your face and mouth and freshen your eyes with cold water. Then return to your seat, sit with spine erect, freshening your mind as if you were standing on the edge of a ten-thousand-foot precipice, and concentrate on taking up your *Hua Tou*. If you keep on working like this for seven days, you will certainly come to the Realization. It was such an effort as this that I made forty years ago.'

"I began to improve as soon as I followed this instruction. On the second day I felt that I could not close my eyes even if I wanted to, and on the third day that my body was floating in the air; on the fourth day I became completely unconscious of anything going on in this world. That night I stood leaning against a balustrade for some time. My mind was as serene as if it were in a state of unconsciousness. I kept my *Hua Tou* constantly before me, and then returned to my seat. As I was about to sit down, I suddenly experienced a sensation that my whole body, from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet, was split. The feeling was rather like having one's skull crushed, or like being lifted right up to the sky from the bottom of a ten-thousand-foot well. I then told Master Yen about this [indescribable ecstasy] and the nonattaching joy that I had just experienced.

"But Master Yen said: 'No, this is not it. You should keep on working at your meditation.'

"At my request he then quoted from the words of Dharma, the last lines being:

To propagate and glorify the "upgoing" affair of  
 Buddhas and Patriarchs  
 You still need a good hammer-stroke  
 On the back of your head.

"I kept on saying to myself: 'Why do I need a hammering on the back of my head?' Clearly there was still some slight doubt in my mind, something of which I was not sure. So I went on meditating a long time every day for almost half a year. Then, while I was boiling some herbs for a headache, I recalled a koan in which a question was put to Naja by Red Nose: 'If you return your bones to your father and your flesh to your mother, where would "you" then be?'

"I remembered that when I was first asked this question by the host monk I could not answer, but now, suddenly, my doubt was broken. Later I went to Meng Shan. Master Meng Shan asked me: 'When and where can one consider his Zen Work completed?'

"Again I could not answer. Master Meng Shan then urged me to work harder at meditation [*Dhyana*] and so wash away worldly habitual thoughts. Each time I entered his room and gave my answer to his interrogation, he always said that I still had not got it. One day I meditated from afternoon to the next morning, using the power of *Dhyana* to sustain and press forward, until I directly reached [the stage of] profound subtlety. Arising from *Dhyana*, I went to the Master and told him my experience. He asked, 'What is your original face?'

"As I was about to answer, the Master drove me out and closed his door. From that time on I gained a subtle improvement every day. Later I realized that the whole difficulty had come about because I had not stayed long enough with Master Hsueh Yen to work on the subtle and fine part of the task. But how fortunate I was to meet a really good Zen Master. Only through him was I able to reach such a stage. I had not realized that if one exerts himself in an incessant and compelling manner he will gain some realization from time to time, lessening his ignorance at each step of the way. Master Meng



Shan said to me: 'This is like stripping a pearl. The more you strip it, the brighter, clearer, and purer it becomes. One stripping of this kind is superior to a whole incarnation's work of another.'

"Nevertheless, every time I tried to answer my Master's question, I was always told that something was still lacking in me.

"One day in meditation the word 'lacking' came into my mind, and suddenly I felt my body and mind open wide from the core of my marrow and bone, through and through. [The feeling was] as though old piled-up snow was suddenly melting away [under the bright] sun that had emerged after many dark and cloudy days. I could not help but laugh out heartily. I jumped down from my seat, caught Master Meng Shan's arm, and said to him: "Tell me, tell me! What do I lack? What do I lack?"

"The Master slapped my face thrice, and I prostrated myself before him three times. He said: 'Oh, Tieh Shan, it has taken you several years to get here.' " 7

## *Zen and Mahayana Buddhism*

How does the teaching of Zen compare with that of the two main schools of Mahayana, namely, Yogacara and Madhyamika?

From the Mahayana viewpoint, the only real differences between Zen and conventional Buddhism are the unique techniques applied and the unconventional expressions used by Zen in illustrating the *Prajna*-truth of the mind-essence. Zen agrees with the basic philosophy of both Yogacara and Madhyamika and embraces the essence of both these teachings. First let us see in what way Zen resembles Yogacara.

## YOGACARA AND ZEN:

The Mind-only (*Vijnaptimatra*) philosophy of Yogacara is summarized by Hsuan Chuang in his translation-composition of *Chen Wei Shih Lun* as follows: "No dharmas<sup>8</sup> found in either *Sangsara* or *Nirvana* are apart from consciousness. Some of them can be ascribed to the self-forms of consciousness; others to the counterparts of and the objects transformed by consciousness; and others to the divisions, realms, and essence of consciousness."<sup>9</sup>

The first and the last are the most important points of the Mind-only philosophy. Through them we can clearly see the parallels between Zen and Yogacara.

According to Yogacara, each of the Eight Consciousnesses<sup>10</sup> has three functional divisions:<sup>11</sup> first, the objective or seen portion (*laksana-bhaga*), equivalent to what the epistemologists call sense-data; second, the subjective or seeing portion (*darsana-bhaga*), the cognitive faculty which many philosophers erroneously take as the mind per se; and, third, the self-witnessing portion (*saksatkari-bhaga*). This self-witnessing or self-awareness portion is considered by Yogacara as pure consciousness itself, while the other two portions are considered to be merely false imaginings created by consciousness through its habitual patterns. This emphasis on the self-awareness portion is of great importance, and of far-reaching effect, especially from the practical viewpoint. It is also found in Zen, Zen Master Shen Hui (668-770) said: "The one word 'knowledge' (*chih*) is the gateway to all mysteries."<sup>12</sup> What he meant here by *chih* was deep self-awareness or *Prajna*-intuition, as Dr. Suzuki has rightly pointed out in his "Reply to Hu Shih."<sup>13</sup> This *chih*, or self-awareness, is intrinsically nondualistic. It can be aware of itself, and



can be aware as such, without any outer object as an indispensable "reliance" or stimulus whereby thoughts within the dualistic pattern are brought into play. Thus the retaining of self-awareness will automatically stop the functioning of the first portion (the objective known) as well as the second portion (the subjective knowing). The cultivation of self-awareness or pure consciousness will thus eventually annihilate all dualistic thoughts and bring one to Buddhahood. This is the core of Yogacara and the reason why both Yogacara and Zen claim the importance of seeing one's mind-essence by warding off the dualistic pattern of thought.

Both Zen and Yogacara claim that no dharmas exist apart from the mind, of which they are manifestations and images. The only difference between Zen and Yogacara is their ways of approaching and expressing the same truth. For instance, Yogacara explains the states of mind through an analytical approach, in a pedantic and somewhat wearying manner. With great patience it goes into all details and classifications of every state of mind, whereas Zen expresses them in a more lively and dramatic way. In contrast to Yogacara's detailed descriptions as to how the *Alaya* (storehouse) consciousness conjures up the outer world, projects its own images, holds the seeds-of-names-and-forms, seeds-of-habitual-thoughts, etc., Zen explains the same truths in a very simple and illuminating way.

This art of elucidating the profound and obscure Truth through simple and lively words is found in many Zen stories. Hui Neng's (638-713) remark on the moving flag and wind is a typical example: "Two monks were arguing whether it was the wind or the flag that was moving. For a long time they could not settle the problem. Then Hui Neng arose from the audience and said: 'It is neither the wind, nor the flag, but the mind that moves.'"<sup>12</sup> In contrast to Yogacara, Zen explains

the profoundest truth in the simplest language and the easiest manner.

Another sharp contrast between Yogacara and Zen is that the former takes the gradual approach toward Enlightenment, while the latter goes straight ahead to grasp it directly. The gradual approach of Yogacara is typified by its meditation process, called "Observation on the Mind-only Doctrine in Five Steps," as systematized by K'uei Chi (632-682). The third is the crucial step. It is called "reducing the offshoots to the main consciousness." In this stage the student is taught to strip off the first and second portions and come to self-awareness. The fourth step is called "curtailing the inferior and unfolding the superior consciousness." In this stage the student is taught to absorb himself in pure consciousness and dissociate himself from the functional activities. The fifth stage is called "discarding the forms and realizing the nature of consciousness," "forms" meaning the "shadow" or the "clinging" of pure consciousness. In other words, one cannot fully realize the nature of ultimate Reality until he has annihilated all the inborn and acquired clings, including those to the ego and the dharmas. These progressive stages of unfolding pure consciousness remind us of the famous Zen Master Te Shan's remark: "If you do not understand, I'll give you thirty blows, and if you do, I'll give you thirty blows just the same." <sup>15</sup>

It is easy to understand the justification of being struck if one does not understand the truth. But why does one deserve a blow *after* his enlightenment? Superficially, it seems to be the Master's intention to test the disciple, but when we think about it, do we not sense that the blow given after one's enlightenment is aimed at bringing the disciple up to a stage of further enlightenment by driving him out of clinging to the shallow experience that he hitherto had attained? Zen Masters sel-



dom explain their intention plainly if they can help it. They love to act rather than explain, to demonstrate rather than expound. Here and here only does Zen sharply differ from Yogacara.

*briefly*  
MADHYAMIKA AND ZEN:

*Let us now consider how Zen compares in Madhyamika.*  
The outstanding and unique contribution of Buddhism to philosophy is its vast and profound teaching of Voidness (*Sunyata*). Glancing over the history of philosophy, both Eastern and Western, it is difficult to find a school of thought that can equal Buddhism on this subject. It seems that one of the main interests that has inspired the philosophers and theologians of the West to search after Truth is this: What is existence and how do things exist? We may even go so far as to say that this is the springboard of Western philosophies. In contrast to this "emphasis on the study of existence," Buddhism has put all its stress on the "study of voidness, on non-existence." Present-day Western thinkers may not yet have seen clearly the importance and significance of *Sunyata*, for it was only recently that this philosophy was introduced to the West, except in fragments through limited translations of Buddhist texts. While the whole field of *Sunyata* studies remains to be fully explored by Western thinkers, the philosophy of Voidness has been of incalculable influence on both Buddhist and non-Buddhist thinkers throughout Asia, as history has shown.

When *Sunyata* was practiced and speculated upon in the old days of Buddhist history, the theory of non-ego (*anatman*) and the thought of the "Nirvana without residue" (*nirupadhisesanirvanam*) were formulated, and many Arhats were also produced. When *Sunyata* was examined by the analytical-minded Yogacara scholars, the Mind-only philosophy with its theory of the twofold Voidness, together with the elaborate system

of Buddhist psychology, was founded. When it conjoined with Tantra, the Diamond Vehicle (*Vajrayana*) emerged. When thoroughly absorbed into the minds of the faithful and candid Tibetans, it overwhelmed them and finally superseded the ritualistic Tibetan Tantrism, giving birth to the widely practiced teaching called "the Mind-essence Practice" (Tibetan, *sems ngo*) of the rNyin-ma and bKar-gyud schools. When *Sunyata* is treated not as a game of pure speculation but as the only means by which all serious problems of Buddhism can be solved, one is led to search out the practical, instead of the purely theoretical, teachings of *Sunyata* that help one to reach Enlightenment. This impulse was so strong and so earnest that, once conjoined with the practical Chinese mind, it could not help but produce Ch'an (Zen). It is therefore impossible to understand any form of Buddhism, especially Zen, without a thorough understanding of the philosophy of Voidness.

There is not space here to discuss in full the relation between Zen and the *Prajnaparamita* of Madhyamika philosophy, so only a few Zen stories and some common sayings of *Prajnaparamita* will be given to illustrate the similarities between the two.

Madhyamika (Middle Way) is also called the Doctrine of Voidness. Its central philosophy is the study of Voidness, but Voidness is difficult to describe or define in its direct and unmistakable sense. The human mind is completely and helplessly bound up with the belief in existence. Forms of human thought—good or bad, shallow or profound, synthetic or analytical—all are produced by "clinging to the dharmas" which makes Voidness inaccessible to the mind. As a consequence, the use of any word or idea to define, or even describe, Voidness is sure to fail. We can best describe it only through implication. For instance, "void" means containing *no-thing*, etc. No matter how hard we try, we



can describe or define Voidness only through the annulment of existence, although this is obviously an indirect and useless approach. The definition brought out in this way can never be positive and satisfactory in meaning. The very absence of a positive definition of Voidness reflects the truth and the practical value of the Eight Negations<sup>16</sup> of Madhyamika. Although Voidness can be reached through both negation and assertion, as many Zen stories show, the best avenue of approach for most people is through negation. Negation is the best antidote for the inherited overbearing tendency toward the ego- and dharma-clingings of the mind. Thus these Eight Negations, given in the *Madhyamika Sastra*, should be treated not as negative philosophy, but as instructions with practical value for *Prajna*-meditation. The ultimate Truth is expressed here through absolute negation. This is called "to illustrate through negating," which is a favorite method widely used by Zen Masters. We may even go so far as to say that the majority of Zen koans were based on this approach.

The ingenious Zen masters used colorful phrases and expressions to illustrate the *Prajna*-truth. *Tou-to*<sup>17</sup> is a very good example. *Tou* means "to penetrate or break through," *to* means "to release or to strip off." To break through the walls of clinging and to strip off dualistic conceptions is the only way to obtain Enlightenment. The purpose of preaching the Eight Negations, Eighteen Voidnesses, etc., in *sastras* and *sutras* was merely to make us break through and strip off! But note how easy and how simple the Zen expression is: the bulky literature of *Prajnaparamita* and Madhyamika is explained in two words! In short, the teaching of Madhyamika is in essence identical with that of Zen, the only difference being that Zen expresses it in a more practical and lively manner. The blows and the unexpected answers of Zen that "knock one out" are a more direct and more prac-

tical method than the Eight Negations and Eighteen Voidnesses, etc., ever could offer. They carry one right to the heart of *Prajna*-truth.

The Sixth Patriarch asked Huai Jang (?-775): "Where do you come from?" Huai Jang replied: "I come from Mount Su." The Patriarch said: "What is it and how does it come?" Huai Jang answered: "Anything I could say would miss the point."<sup>17</sup>

In contrast to the Eight Negations, this remark is surely more explicit and direct in illustrating the undefinable and incomprehensible nature of *Prajna*.

A monk asked Chao Chou (778-896) "All things are reducible to one—to what is the one reducible?"

Does this question not typically reflect the profound aspect of the "Thoroughness of the Void," which transcends all monotheistic principles and characterizes Buddhism as a "super" religion? But Chao Chou replied: "When I was staying at Chin Chou, I made a robe of cloth weighing seven *chin*."<sup>18</sup> How illogical this answer seems to be, and how stupid the idea that one would make a nine-pound robe to wear! This statement, which makes no sense whatsoever to an intellectual, sounds very stupid even to the most ordinary man. But if we think about it carefully, this down-to-earth, seemingly stupid statement demonstrates vividly the limitations of human thought—solidly molded in derivative and sequential patterns. It suggests that we should go beyond conceptualization to get the unanswerable question answered. Chao Chou was indeed a remarkable Master, but sometimes he was too profound to be understood. Even Huang Po (?-850) failed to follow him,<sup>19</sup> while Hsueh Feng (822-908) called him the ancient Buddha and bowed to him at a distance when he was asked to comment on him.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, Zen stories and sayings do not shock or puzzle Madhyamika scholars. They merely



find the Zen approach interesting, with some good as well as some bad points. They perceive, too, that there is a great danger of falling into nonsensical talk without inner understanding of the subject. This is what has actually happened in Zen, whose Masters called this type of worthless imitation "Zen from the mouth." To Madhyamika scholars, the Zen claim of the Buddha's being a stick of dry dung is neither sacrilegious nor surprising, for they know what the *Prajnaparamita-hrdaya Sutra* says so very clearly: "The void nature of all dharmas is not arising or extinction, not pure or impure, not increasing or decreasing. . . ." If one understands that reality is neither pure nor impure, he finds the Buddha in the dung as well as in Heaven.<sup>21</sup>

In closing our review of Madhyamika and Zen, we may draw the following conclusion: The study of Zen leads to a better understanding of Madhyamika, and the study of Madhyamika will lead to a better understanding of Zen.

### *The "Four Distinctions" of Lin Chi*

Beneath the surface of the seemingly irrational Zen koans is there a system, order, or category which, when followed, will make Zen more intelligible?

The answer is "Yes." Many different systems have been laid down by Zen Masters to classify the koans. Among them Lin Chi's "Four Distinctions"<sup>22</sup> may be considered as the best and clearest, and through them many enigmatic koans may be deciphered. They were given by Lin Chi to his disciples, when he said:

Sometimes I snatch away the person, but save, or do not snatch away, the object;

Sometimes I snatch away the object, but save the person;  
 Sometimes I snatch away both the object and the person;  
 and  
 Sometimes I snatch away neither the person nor the  
 object.<sup>23</sup>

To make the above quotation understandable I shall quote first Lin Chi's own abstruse explanation, then Tsu Yuan's (17th century) comment, and give in conclusion my own interpretation. But first let me give some explanation of this peculiar expression, the "Four Distinctions": "To snatch away the person" means to reject, refuse, repudiate, disapprove, or "steal away" the person who comes to the Zen Master for instructions; "to save the object" (*ching*) means not to disapprove the remark made by the person. The word *ching* as used by the Chinese Buddhists has many meanings, such as the scene, domain, sphere, object, understanding, etc. Zen Buddhists seemed to have a special usage for this word; for instance, *ching-pu-sheng* means a certain specific experience of Zen which has not yet arisen in the disciple. Thus *ching* means the specific experience or understanding within one's mind, which, of course, can be referentially treated as an "object" visualized or comprehended by the mind. For the sake of convenience, therefore, I now translate it as "object," although this should not be taken too literally.

Generally speaking, "to snatch away the person but save the object" means to disapprove or reject the questioner but not to reject his remark. The other three Distinctions can be understood by analogy.

These "Four Distinctions" are methods used by Zen Masters in dealing with their disciples on four different levels of Zen understanding.

Lin Chi's own explanation is found in his "Discourse":<sup>24</sup>



The disciple asked: "What does it mean to snatch away the person, but save the object?"

Lin Chi answered:

"When the bright sun arises,  
Embroideries cover the whole earth.  
The hanging hairs of the infant  
Are as white as snow."

The disciple asked again: "What does it mean to snatch away the object, but save the person?"

Lin Chi answered:

"The order of the king is sanctioned in the whole nation,  
While the general is isolated from the smoke and dust  
Far away beyond the borderland."

"What does it mean to snatch away both the person and the object?"

Lin Chi answered:

"While no message is forthcoming from Ping and Feng  
One stays alone in the whole area."

"What, then, does it mean to snatch away neither the person nor the object?"

Lin Chi answered:

"While the Emperor ascends his royal seat,  
The songs the old folks sing  
Are heard in the fields."

These stanzas are very enigmatic, especially the second and third. Although the first and fourth are reasonably clear, the gist of the fourfold method is still very difficult for ordinary people to understand.

To make the passage more intelligible I now quote

the explanations given by Tsu Yuan in his influential book, *Mind—the Source of All Dharma*.<sup>25</sup>

The disciple asked Tsu Yan: "What does it mean to snatch away the person but not snatch away [save] the object?"

Tsu Yuan answered, "In the realm of self-awareness, if one can empty his mind, what obstruction can there be from an outer object? [Therefore], when a Zen Master teaches a disciple of low capacity, he should snatch away the person but not the object."

The disciple asked: "What does it mean to snatch away the object, but not the person?"

"In the realm of self-awareness, [one] does not dwell on outer objects but reflects with his mind alone. [Therefore], the Zen Master should snatch away the object but not the person when the disciple is of average capacity."

"What does it mean to snatch away both the person and the object?"

Tsu Yuan answered: "In the realm of self-awareness, both the mind and the object are empty; whence, then, comes the delusion? Therefore, the Zen Master should snatch away both the person and the object when the disciple is well-endowed."

"What, then, does it mean to snatch away neither the person nor the object?"

Tsu Yuan said: "In the realm of self-awareness, mind naturally remains as mind and objects as objects. The Zen Master therefore takes away neither the object nor the person when the disciple is highly gifted."

These explanations may not be completely satisfactory or clear enough to illustrate the riddle of the "Four Distinctions." Nevertheless, they do give some clue by which to unravel the hidden meaning of the subject. I will therefore use some Zen stories with my own inter-



pretations to explain how these methods are used on four different levels.

A chief monk asked Lin Chi, "Are not the teachings of the Three Vehicles and the Twelve Divisions given for illustrating Buddha-nature?" <sup>28</sup>

Lin Chi answered, "The weeds have not yet been cleared away."

This reply employs the first method, namely, to snatch away the person but save the object. What the monk had said was correct, but from the practical Zen viewpoint one would say, "What is the use if one cannot have his Buddha-nature unfolded?"

As one Zen proverb says, "Much talk about food will never still one's hunger." Or again, "If the teaching of the Buddha cannot actually bring one to direct Enlightenment, what difference remains between common weeds and bulky *sutras*?" There was nothing wrong with the remark made by the monk, but the fault lay in his lack of a direct experience in *Prajna*-truth. This was why Lin Chi said: "The weeds have not yet been cleared away." The monk then fought back by asking, "But can the Buddha ever cheat me?" Lin Chi replied, "Where is the Buddha?"

To a person who has no direct experience of the innate Buddhahood within himself Buddha is merely a name, a notion or shadow which does not mean anything at all. This is why Lin Chi said mockingly to him, "Where is the Buddha?"

The following koan illustrates this first method even more clearly. One day when Lin Chi saw a monk approaching him, he raised his duster. The monk then bowed before him, but Lin Chi beat him. After a while another monk came. Lin Chi again raised his duster. When the monk paid no respect to him, Lin Chi beat

him as well. The paying or not paying of respect was obviously not the real reason for the beatings. The fact was that as soon as Lin Chi saw these two monks he immediately knew what kind of men they were. No matter whether they bowed or not, he beat them both. This shows clearly that what Lin Chi cared for was not the outward action but the inner realization of the person.<sup>27</sup>

Now let us see how the second method, "to snatch away the object but save the person," is applied.

Lin Chi once said in a sermon, "In the lump of red flesh there is a True Man of No Position. He constantly goes in and comes out by the gate of your face. Those who have not seen him should try to do so."

A monk then came forward and asked Lin Chi, "What is this True Man of No Position?"

Lin Chi immediately descended from his seat, held the arm of the monk, and said, "Say it! Say it! [snatch away the person]."

When the monk was about to answer, Lin Chi released his arm and said disdainfully, "What kind of dry dung is this True Man of No Position!"<sup>28</sup>

This is a typical example of "snatching away the object," i.e., the topic in question or the notion one has in mind. The koan shows how the Zen Master sets the trap with a fancy idea and a strange name and waits for the clinging-bound and the constantly pursuing disciple to fall into it. This kind of surprising shock will not only knock all notions from one's sequential thought but also bring one to the state of the beyond.

The third method, "to snatch away both the person and object," is a little deeper than the first two. The following koan is a good example of it.

One day Lin Chi was invited by his patron to give a sermon. When he ascended to his seat and was just



about to preach, Ma Ku came forward and asked him, "The All-merciful One [Avalokitesvara] has a thousand arms and a thousand eyes. Which is the main eye?"

Lin Chi answered him, "The All-merciful One has a thousand eyes. Which is the main eye? Say it! Say it!"

Ma Ku then forcibly dragged Lin Chi down from the seat and sat upon it himself. Lin Chi walked very close to Ma Ku and said to him [very humbly], "I do not understand, sir."

Ma Ku was about to say something, when Lin Chi immediately dragged him down from the seat and again sat on it himself. Ma Ku then walked out of the hall. After Ma Ku had left Lin Chi also descended from the seat, and no sermon was given.<sup>29</sup>

This koan shows how both Lin Chi and Ma Ku tried to "snatch away" each other, and how both the questioner and the answerer tried to strip off from each other every bit of objective understanding and subjective attitude. The highlight is in the last part of the story: after Lin Chi had ascended the seat for the second time, Ma Ku went out of the hall. When Lin Chi saw Ma Ku leave, he also descended from the seat, and no sermon was given. If Ma Ku had not walked out, or if Lin Chi had remained on his seat as the victor, each of them would then have fallen into the trap of the other and would have been caught in the snare-of-clingings. Since it would require too many words to explain this koan in detail, I have given here a clue to its meaning and will let the reader find the explanation for himself.

Now let us come to the fourth realm of Zen understanding, "to snatch away neither the person nor the object."

Generally speaking, the koans of this category are somewhat easier to understand. The legendary first Zen koan is a typical example of this method. When Buddha

Sakyamuni held the flower in his hand, smiled, but uttered not one word before the congregation, no one in the assembly understood what the Buddha meant. But Mahakasyapa smiled quietly as if in understanding. The Buddha then said, "I have the treasure of the unmistakable teachings, the wonderful Mind of Nirvana, the true form without form, the marvelous and subtle Dharma, beyond all words, the teaching to be given and transmitted outside of the [regular Buddhist] doctrines. I have now handed it to Mahakasyapa."<sup>30</sup>

Then there is the well-known Zen saying, "A mountain is a mountain, water is water, when hungry I eat, when drowsy I sleep; I do not search for the Buddha, or look for Dharma, yet I always make my obeisance to the Buddha."

Another interesting story may also be helpful in understanding the koans which illustrate the fourth realm of Zen understanding.

One day Lin Chi was standing in front of the hall. When he saw his Master Huang Po coming, he closed his eyes. Huang Po pretended to be frightened and returned to his room. Then Lin Chi went to his Master's room, bowed down before him, and thanked him.<sup>31</sup>

My interpretation is this: When Lin Chi saw Huang Po coming he purposely closed his eyes, completely disregarding and rejecting his revered Master—this would snatch away both the person and object. However, Huang Po was even more profound than Lin Chi. He mockingly pretended to be frightened by this blow. Lin Chi's intention was brought out into the open, and his blow thus missed its mark. Surpassed by his Master in profundity and with his understanding sharpened, Lin Chi went to Huang Po's room to thank him and to pay his respects. If my interpretation is correct, this story shows a crossing of swords between a sage of the third realm (Lin Chi) and a sage of the fourth realm (Huang



Po). The result was the complete defeat of Lin Chi—his eloquent gesture of closing his eyes was annihilated by his Master's taunt. What choice did Lin Chi have but to bow down at the feet of his Master and thank him heartily?

The above explanations of Lin Chi's Four Distinctions give some idea of how Zen Masters express themselves and instruct their disciples at different levels.

One other important point should be studied before one can hope to understand koans in an intelligible and systematic way—namely, Tung Shan's (807–869) doctrine of "The Five Ranks of Lord and Vassal"<sup>32</sup> (*Wu Wei Chun Ch'eng*), which is one of the most important subjects of Zen Buddhism. Unfortunately, there is no space to deal with it here.

Zen is the most difficult, puzzling, and complicated subject in the field of Buddhist study. To understand it on an intellectual level, one must be well-versed in the philosophy of Mahayana Buddhism and also acquainted with the unique traditions of Ch'an (Zen). In addition, one must also have some direct Zen experience through actual practice, because, after all, the essence of Zen consists in one's own direct personal experience, not in philosophical speculation. All these factors make Zen extremely difficult to study and to explain. Owing to the complexity and profundity of Zen Buddhism, no one can portray it in a flawless manner. It is impossible, therefore, to paint a perfect picture of Zen. When one side is brightly lighted, the other side is often obscured; when one aspect is stressed, another aspect is often distorted. Therefore, a balanced way of introducing Zen becomes all the more desirable and necessary.

In other words, all the important facets of Zen should be presented in an even and impartial manner. Both the negative and positive aspects should be introduced—its evasiveness as well as its immediacy, its passive-

ness as well as its dynamics, its intelligibility as well as its obscurity, etc.—all should be elaborated. To understand Zen one must examine it from all its different angles. One must study it historically, psychologically, and philosophically, as well as within its literary, yogic, and spiritual frames of reference. It is only through studying it from all these different angles and levels that one may reach a correct and impartial understanding of Zen.

In the foregoing chapters an attempt has been made to comment on the various facets of Zen Buddhism which, the author presumes, may not yet have been fully introduced to the West. It is not the author's ambition to present a complete and perfect picture of Zen Buddhism in this book. Rather, it is through a wish of his to provide a balanced view on the subject that this humble effort is made.



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IV.  
Buddha  
and  
Meditation

Contrary to Western belief, Zen can neither be practiced nor understood without some knowledge of the concept of Buddhahood and the principles of meditation. Each requires a book to do it justice. Nevertheless, the following brief account of the three aspects of Buddhahood, the six patterns of human thought, the seven different types of meditation practice, and the three successive stages of meditation will be useful to the beginner.

*The Three Aspects of  
Buddhahood in Relation  
to the Six Patterns of  
Human Thinking*

What is "Buddha"? To this question there have been many answers. Some religionists say that He founded a

form of heathenism called "Buddhism"; the man in the street says that He is an idol worshipped by misguided Orientals; some philosophers say that He was a thinker who taught and established the philosophy and religion called "Buddhism"; historians say that "The Buddha" is a reverential title attributed to a person called Gautama Sakyamuni, who lived some time between 560 and 480 B.C.—and so on.

But how do the devotees of Buddhism *themselves* envision Buddha from their religious point of view, and how do they define Him as representing a supreme goal—one to be adored, imitated, and achieved? This question is of the utmost importance, because it penetrates directly to the very heart of Buddhism itself, and is akin to the inquiry into the nature of God which has always been regarded as the central theme in the study of most religions. There is a Tibetan proverb which says: "If one understands the meaning of the term 'Buddha,' one knows all of Buddhism." From the viewpoint of an outsider, this statement may seem to be an exaggeration; but the orthodox Buddhist holds it to be very close to the truth. In the past twenty-five centuries many Buddhist scholars have spent their whole lives studying this question, and have written endless and complicated commentaries on it which only add to the confusion. Fortunately, the subject can be simplified by the following definition which is accepted by most Buddhist devotees: *A Buddha is one who possesses Perfect Wisdom, Perfect Compassion, and Perfect Power.* Let us consider, one by one, these three essentials of Buddhahood.

### THE PERFECT WISDOM OF BUDDHA

The Perfect Wisdom of Buddha has two facets, one called "The Wisdom of Knowing the Thing as It Is"



(Chinese: *Ju so yu chih*), and the other called "The Wisdom of Knowing All" (Chinese: *Chin so yu chih*). The former may be understood as "Vertical" and the latter as "Horizontal Wisdom."

Imagine the water in a cup. The ordinary person will see it as nothing but a cup of plain water, that is, a liquid with which to quench his thirst; a chemist, as a compound of hydrogen and oxygen; a physicist, as the complex result of electronic movement; a philosopher, as something expressing "relationships" and "causation"; an enlightened Bodhisattva, as the manifestation of his own mind; and Buddha, as the outflow of perfect Buddhahood. Converging within this simple object—a cup of water—are a great many realms of existence and depths of Being for our intelligence to reach, measure, and comprehend. The shallowness or depth of our intelligence determines the realms to which it is capable of penetrating. The "Vertical Wisdom" of Buddha, therefore, is a penetrating insight—successively piercing through all the different levels and realms of existence to touch the very depths of Being itself. It is a wisdom of profundity, a wisdom that goes beyond the realms of common sense, science, philosophy, and religion; a wisdom that probes into the uttermost depths of Dharma—the indescribable and unthinkable "Suchness." This is "Vertical Wisdom."

On the other hand, the meaning of "Horizontal Wisdom," or "The Wisdom-of-Knowing-All," is clearly indicated by the term itself. It denotes the omniscient aspect of Buddha's Wisdom, which is capable of knowing everything and is therefore rather difficult for modern people to accept. The famous Chinese philosopher, Chuang Tzu, said: "Life is finite while knowledge is infinite. To pursue infinite knowledge in this finite life is indeed hopeless!" Men of the twentieth century feel especially sympathetic toward statements such as this.

In the old days there were undoubtedly certain great scholars or sages who were regarded by their contemporaries as wise men who "knew everything." A Chinese proverb says: "A Confucian scholar is put to shame if there is one branch of learning that he does not know." But nowadays we think it presumptuous for a man to claim to know everything, even in *one* field of learning. Therefore, to many people it seems that All-knowing Wisdom is something supernatural and beyond the reach of the human mind.

Contrary to this common belief, however, Buddhism asserts that every sentient being is a potential Buddha, capable of reaching Buddhahood (which includes this All-knowing Wisdom) if he makes a correct and sufficient effort. If this be so, how then does Buddhism convincingly explain such a possibility as "knowing all" to us? To answer this question we must first analyze the patterns, or molds, within which the human mind functions.

As a result of such analysis, Mahayana scholars have concluded that the human mind functions in accordance with six basic patterns, or ways of thinking, that is, cumulatively, limitatively, discordantly, delusively, impotently and wastefully, and "clingingly." Influenced by these faulty and deep-rooted habitual ways of thought, we find it natural to believe that "Omniscient Wisdom" is something very attractive to contemplate, but completely beyond our grasp.

But suppose we could transform these faulty patterns within which our minds have so far functioned into new forms, elevating the mind to new horizons and freeing it from all its former "attachments," would the Wisdom-of-Knowing-All still appear to be as remote and unattainable as before? The vision of the human eye is limited, but with the assistance of instruments its scope can be extended to hitherto inaccessible regions of space.



Would not a simile such as this be applicable to the problem of the limited human mind versus the Wisdom of Omniscience? Before attempting to answer this question, we must first examine the six basic patterns of human thought mentioned above, and see in what manner they have molded the functions of the human mind.

1. *The human way of thinking is cumulative.* This means that human knowledge is gained through a "building-up" process, a process of gradual accumulation. For example, when we were children in school, we were first taught the alphabet; then we were taught to read words and sentences and later to write letters, "themes," or compositions. Finally, the knowledge accumulated and the talent developed may have enabled us to write books, or to express creatively highly complicated thoughts and new ideas. This process through which human knowledge is gained is one of building and adding to, of welding newly acquired segments of knowledge to the old mass. All is linked together by a process which is finite, partial, limitative, and conditional in its nature and origin. Because the very nature of this cumulative process has preconditioned and predetermined its outcome, it *can never come to an end*. There is no terminal point on the road of accumulation—we shall always find plenty of room in which to add something more. To collect drops of rain water from the roof of a house, even for a lifetime, will add nothing to the level of the ocean. Likewise, through a cumulative way of thinking, one will never be able to attain the All-knowing Wisdom of Buddhahood.

2. *The human way of thinking is limitative.* This is obvious since we all know that the human mind can usually think of only one thing at a time. We rarely find a gifted person who can give his attention to several things simultaneously, or deal with several problems at the same time. I remember that as a boy, when I was

living in Peiping, I often loitered away my free time in the market place. My favorite spot was a certain "general store," the owner of which was a remarkable man. He could fix his mind on a number of different things simultaneously. He often sat on a high chair back of the counter, with a Chinese brush-pen in his right hand, writing up his accounts. Meanwhile the five fingers of his left hand were constantly moving up and down at great speed on an abacus; and at the same time his mouth never stopped talking to a customer or instructing his boy helper. Besides all this, his two big black eyes never slackened their watchfulness, lest a customer surreptitiously pick up something from a remote shelf. This man might be regarded as quite an unusual person. Nevertheless, the genius of his mind was still basically limitative, for even he could not think of as many as *ten*, let alone a hundred, a thousand, or an infinite number of things at the same time. Since the human mind almost invariably follows the "one-at-a-time" pattern to carry out its functionings, it has no choice but to remain in the region of finiteness and limitation.

3. *The human way of thinking is discordant.* Emotion and reason are two paramount, yet conflicting, elements that constitute the major portion of the ever fluctuating human mind. Emotion fills us with strong feelings of what we would *like* to do, but reason warns us coldly of what we should *not* do. Driven by these two conflicting forces, life is mainly a constant battle between the cold forces of reason and the hot forces of the emotions. In examining these two opponents, we find that they are not only opposite to, and offsetting each other, like water and fire, but also discover the interesting fact that they do not arise *simultaneously*. When reason has reached its highest peak, emotion is at its lowest ebb, and vice versa. For example, at a time when our minds are absorbed in trying to solve an



abstruse problem in philosophy or mathematics, the reasoning faculties are in high gear, but the emotions are scarcely perceptible. On the other hand, at a time when we are in the throes of love-making, or furiously fighting an enemy, the emotions rise proportionately and reason drops to its lowest point. For this reason, we never hear of a mathematician or scientist formulating a new hypothesis or producing a new discovery when quarreling or making love. In the human mind reason and emotion are hostile forces offsetting, but not coexisting with, each other.

If this were also true in the Mind of Buddha, the consequences would indeed be catastrophic. Imagine that you are facing a vital problem, and have no other resort but to send an urgent and desperate prayer to Buddha. But he responds, "Wait, wait, my friend! Do not pray to me now; this is not the proper time, because my reason is very active at present but my emotions are low—I am not in the mood to grant favors. Try again tomorrow, when I may be in a better frame of mind!" This may sound ridiculous; but it actually illustrates a deep and significant truth of Buddhahood. A perfect Buddha must first have brought his reason and emotion together into complete and unalterable harmony before he could ever have *reached Buddhahood*. Emotion and reason, now transformed into Compassion and Wisdom, *should arise simultaneously at all times* without imbalance or fluctuation, and should merge together into one great, inseparable whole. The simultaneous arising of Compassion and Wisdom is indeed one of the great wonders of Buddhahood—a fascinating and vital topic much discussed by Mahayana Buddhist scholars everywhere.

4. *The human way of thinking is delusive.* Suppose we are now looking at the wall in our room; our eyes tell us that it is an upright, smooth surface standing stably and silently before us. We walk one step forward

to touch it, and find that the wall is something firm, cold, and solid. Then we remember what chemistry and physics have to say about a wall. They assert that it is composed of various compounds and elements containing innumerable atoms, electrons, protons, etc., all constantly moving at incredible speeds in their innumerable orbits. So our senses and our minds tell us radically different stories about the same thing. To which should we listen? We human beings are perpetually bombarded by discordant information conveyed by our different "sense-agents"; but fortunately we have a good "compromiser" or "arbitrator"—the mind—which synthesizes, integrates, and smooths out the conflicts between its agents, who are constantly reporting to "headquarters" from their various outposts. Although our conscious mind is a remarkable agent in itself—practical, intelligent, and imaginative, its main concern in our everyday lives is not to check on whether the senses have conveyed the most reliable information, nor to give a verdict on their discordant findings, but rather to see that these agents work harmoniously together.

But here a serious question arises: Is the pragmatic approach taken by the human mind necessarily sound, and does not this integrating and "compromising" process result, perhaps, in a mutilation of the truth? If "right is right" and "wrong is wrong," as our reason tells us, and "right" cannot possibly be "wrong" at the same time, whose findings should we accept—the "static wall" of the eyes or the "dynamic wall" of the mind? From the viewpoint of the eyes, the static wall is right, from that of the mind, the dynamic wall, but from that of the nose, both are wrong. It is impossible to define right and wrong without an absolute standard. Fundamentally they are meaningful only when a certain standard or criterion has been established. Without such a standard, right and wrong both become meaningless. An absolute and final



standard has thus been sought by philosophers and thinkers throughout all ages. Some argue that it is reason; others, that only God, or his Will, can be regarded as absolute, and so on. The final settlement of this problem seems well-nigh impossible. The search and the arguments go on *ad infinitum*.

While no final conclusion can be drawn, the Hua Yen philosophy of Mahayana Buddhism suggests to us one solution. It holds that if any standard is by nature exclusive and "fixed," it can never be considered as "absolute" or final, for if absolute, it must be "all-inclusive"—a standard of totality—and so not an ordinary standard arbitrarily established to measure one thing against another. Such a standard cannot be otherwise than arbitrary and "deadly fixed"; its very nature sets it apart from the dynamic totality of *Dharmadhatu*.<sup>1</sup>

The absolute standard should include, permeate, and embrace all. It is not a standard as such, but is, rather, a realm of wonder, a state of the perfect interpenetration of all Dharmas—the indescribable and inexplicable marvel of Buddhahood.

We seem to have an instinctive urge to seek the Truth, but somehow lack the capacity to find it. The dilemma of trying to set up an absolute standard is merely one of the many puzzles that have harassed mankind since the dawn of civilization. Man's search for Truth has been a never-ending obsession. Buddhist thinkers attribute this predicament to the delusive way of human thinking which, they say, if not qualitatively transformed, will drag man down forever into the morass of futile pursuit.

Another gulf that the human mind cannot bridge separates the realms of "indirect understanding" and "direct realization." We can understand the atomic structure of a thing, but we cannot see or experience it directly. Our minds can only give us the indirect

measure of a thing; they cannot put us in *direct contact* with it. We can appreciate the grand idea of "all in one, and one in all"; but what we actually see around us is still the "all in all, and one in one." With hard work and deep thinking we may come to understand the profound truth of *Sunyata*—the void nature of being as taught by the *Prajnaparamita*; but all that we see and experience in our daily lives is within the *Sangsaric* realm of existence and subsistence. *All these predicaments are caused by what Buddhists call "the delusive way of human thinking."*

5. *The human way of thinking is impotent and wasteful.* According to the Buddhist sages, the major portion of our mental power or talent has never been fully utilized, and thus lies idle and dormant, in the deep recesses of our consciousness; even the small portion of power that is tapped by the average human mind is often diffused and squandered. If one can learn to concentrate, and thus more fully utilize his mental powers, his ability and perspective will be vastly enhanced. A great mind is not stolid or dull, nor is it feeble or capricious. Leaders are always keener minded and more stable than the average person. Their magnetism is also greater. Leadership is characteristic of a form of "natural concentration" which the common man lacks. The qualities that go to make a man more efficient and successful are the result of inborn or acquired powers of concentration, by means of which a man focuses all his mental forces and aims them directly at the problem in hand.

But, according to experienced Buddhist yogis, even if one can concentrate and control his mind reasonably well, he is still far from being able to utilize the major portion of the potential power that lies dormant in his *Alaya*, or "Store Consciousness." This "Store Consciousness" is a vast repository of power, talent, and knowledge that has accumulated throughout countless



lives in the past. Being ignorant and incapable of utilizing this potential power of the Store Consciousness, the average man wastes his life away in trivial pursuits and futile endeavors, while the inexhaustible treasury available to him remains untapped. Buddhist sages therefore have stated that the human way of thinking is impotent and wasteful.

6. *The human way of thinking is a "clinging" way of thinking.* This sixth point, the most important point of all, delineates the innate tendency of the human mind to cling to the apparently "existent" or "substantial" aspect of things; it also implies that human thoughts are always of a "rigid" or "fixed" nature. The human mind seldom or never recognizes the void, insubstantial, and "indefinite" aspect of things. "Clinging" here means the tight grasping of the "existent" facet of all objects, which are then regarded as real and definitive—as if they were in possession of their own self natures.

In short, human clinging is by nature arbitrary, definitive, and exclusive—and so is diametrically opposed to the Buddhist teaching of Voidness and the Whole. All human thoughts are derived from or produced by the fundamental idea of "is-ness," which is essentially arbitrary, stubborn, and fixed. If we pierce into the very core of this idea of "is-ness," we sense it as being nothing but a deep rooted, colossal "clinging."

The study of human "clinging" is a vital subject in Buddhism; its great influence is reflected in Buddhist religion, philosophy, psychology, literature, and art—in practically all fields of Buddhist thought. The emphasis on the study of this crucial and significant subject is one of the outstanding features that have distinguished the teaching of Buddhism from that of other religions and philosophies. The reader is therefore advised to study this subject from whatever sources are available to him.

The above examination of the six patterns of human thought show incontrovertibly that if the All-knowing Wisdom of Buddhahood is attainable at all, it can never be reached through any of these six faulty paths. The innumerable Buddhist teachings are all aimed at correcting such faulty patterns in order to achieve Buddhahood. Among these teachings *Dhyana* (meditation) and *Prajna* (intuitive wisdom) are crucial. Through them the human consciousness can be transformed, and perfect Buddhahood achieved. Since *Prajna* is, on the one hand, the essence of Zen Buddhism, which has been briefly touched upon in the preceding chapters, and, on the other, a vast and comprehensive subject that must be studied exhaustively and independently if it is to be properly understood, this chapter will be confined to the survey of the different aspects of meditation practice in their relation to Buddhahood.

### THE PERFECT COMPASSION OF BUDDHA

The Perfect Compassion of Buddha is all-embracing and non-discriminative. It is an absolute and unconditioned Love. Like everything else in this world, love has a great many depths and grades of profundity. The greater love is, the less it binds itself to "conditions." Religious love is greater in scope and profounder in depth than personal or family love, or love for one's country, etc., because the latter forms are *conditioned*, and so are confined within the narrow boundary of human limitations.

However, there remains another boundary which even religious love seems unable to cross. For example, religion teaches us to love both our neighbors and our enemies, but seldom does it teach us to love "pagans." It admonishes us to love God, but forbids us to love "devils." Heresy has always been considered to be



among the worst of crimes. "Thou shalt not worship false gods" is the paramount commandment in many religions. The spirit and love of a religion can easily transcend the boundaries of family and race, of life and death, but rarely can it transcend that of its own nature. This limitation is implicit in the very tenets of the religion itself. The fervent claim of many religionists that the love of their god is nondiscriminative and unconditioned is true only when their god alone is worshiped, their exclusive dogmas accepted, and their own creed adhered to. The doctrine of exclusiveness that has caused so many misfortunes and confusions seems to have been impregnated in the very core of the religious intolerance reflected in the basic tenets of so many faiths. If we study these tenets in the light of the *Prajnaparamita*, we shall soon discover that behind all the pledged love and grace exalted in so many of the scriptures, there is a deep rooted *clinging*—a clinging to the "one true God," the "one true religion," the "one true principle," etc.—that characterizes and predestines their narrow limitations.

According to Buddhism, *ultimate and unconditioned Love can only be achieved through a thorough realization of Voidness (Sunyata)*. *The highest Compassion is attained only when the highest Wisdom is attained*. In other words, the ultimate Compassion of Buddhahood is brought forth only by destroying all clinging through a realization of the truths of *Maya* and *Sunyata*. In the ultimate sense, the Compassion of Buddha arises not because He possesses an eye or heart which sees or feels the ocean of miseries that genuinely exist on this earth, but it arises in a most natural and spontaneous way. This spontaneous Compassion, a unique possession of Buddhahood, can be brought about only through a deep realization of *Sunyata* and complete identification with Totality. Only through the total destruction of clinging

can the ultimate Compassion be gained; only through negating Buddhahood is Buddhahood achieved. Because there are no sentient beings to be pitied, Buddha has the greatest pity; because from the very beginning no sentient being ever existed, Buddha "came down" to the earth to save sentient beings. Is this paradoxical? If it is, it is only because *we* are paradoxical, not the Truth. From the human viewpoint a paradox is something contradictory and disharmonious; but from Buddha's point of view it is harmony and unity.

Thus the Perfect Compassion of Buddhahood is an all-embracing and unconditioned Love, a Love that consists in and is identical with Perfect Wisdom, that arises not from any form of clinging, but from a total liberation from all attachments.

### THE PERFECT POWER OF BUDDHA

The Perfect Power of Buddha is the greatest and purest power that can possibly exist, but it is not omnipotent. *Buddha is all-knowing and all-merciful, but not almighty.* If any being can be said to be almighty, this means that he is capable of doing anything he wills. In other words, an almighty being could kick this globe to Heaven like a football, thereby eliminating all the troubles and miseries on this planet in no time, if he so desired. But Buddha does not have this arbitrary power, nor did he ever claim to have it, although many other religions claim it for their gods. It should be plainly evident that all-knowledge, all-mercy, and all-power cannot possibly exist in the same being at the same time. An almighty and all-knowing God could not possibly be all-merciful as well; otherwise, his intention of creating this world, with all its resultant miseries and sins and its supposed eternal hells, etc., would become in-



explicable and ridiculous; and as a result, his good conscience and wise foresight would also be reduced to a joke.

Buddha is mighty but not almighty. He cannot impose his will on anyone, nor can He perform or accomplish on someone's behalf something in violation of the Law of Cause and Effect. Buddha does not punish anyone or send anyone to an eternal hell. Such a thing would be impossible to an all-merciful Buddha! If anyone goes to hell, he goes there by himself as a result of his own evil doings. In the Buddhist scriptures there is no saying to the effect that Buddha will punish someone by sending him to hell should he disobey the will of Buddha. On the contrary, the spirit of Buddhism is to encourage people to go down into hell. As the compassionate Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha said, "If I do not go down into hell, who else will go to save the poor creatures there?"

The blessing power of Buddha is like the sun, without which no plant could grow. But the growth of a plant does not depend entirely upon the sun; air, water, soil, and, most important of all, the seed itself, are also indispensable. The air, water, and soil are comparable to one's own efforts toward Enlightenment, and the seed is comparable to the Buddha-nature latent in one's own mind. The combination of all these different factors makes the attainment of Buddhahood possible. Lacking any one of them, Buddhahood would become very remote from us. In short, the Perfect Power of Buddha can give us great assistance and provide favorable conditions for our spiritual growth, but it cannot do everything for us. This is perhaps one of the major differences between Buddhism and other religions.

From the Mahayana viewpoint, though the Perfect Power of Buddhahood does not imply complete omnipotence, it is not too remote from it. The Mahayana

Buddhist maintains that the Perfect Power of Buddha, like the power available from the sun, is infinite and inexhaustible; but the *benefit* that one can *draw from it* depends entirely upon one's individual capacity and effort. With a small magnifying glass one may focus enough heat from sunlight to ignite a match; but with more powerful lenses one may collect enough heat to warm an entire house. If the almighty power of God is understood in *this* light, there is no irreconcilable ground between Buddhism and other religions.

Mahayana Buddhists believe that the different teachings of the various religions are all beneficial and necessary for people of different capacities and perspectives. Some of these teachings may be of an "expedient" or "persuasive" nature, devised for the immature minds of the masses; others are truly the final teachings, only suitable, at our present stage of evolution, for a minority of highly endowed persons. But all religions have played their constructive roles in promoting human welfare and spiritual growth. As a Buddhist sees it, in the big family of divine doctrines there is a distinction only between the preliminary and the advanced, between the "expedient" and the final teachings, but *not* between the "right" and the "wrong" ones.

### *A Survey of the Practice of Buddhist Meditation*

All the six basic patterns of human thought referred to in the preceding pages have a common characteristic—they are all of an ever fluctuating, shifting, and changing nature. The human mind is like a river, constantly flowing onward, meandering and winding hither and thither, full of rapids and whirlpools, seldom quiet, never still. Seemingly the human mind can function only by follow-



ing this acting, fluctuating, and moving pattern. Common sense maintains that the mind—like everything else in this world—must be *active* in order to function, that an “operating” mind must be in motion, and that a “static” mind is dead.

But is this true? Is there any other way in which the human mind may perform its duties without binding itself to this pattern of flux? According to Buddhism, the nature of mind, or consciousness, is “awareness,” which means neither more nor less than “the state of being aware.” The term itself suggests no action, moving, or changing of any kind. Only on the human plane is it true that awareness is coupled with perpetual movement by the driving force of blind will. This condition need not be true on a higher level of consciousness. The consciousness of Buddha never moves, fluctuates, or changes. A consciousness that oscillates, moving from one point (of attention) to another, or changes its form in various ways, cannot possibly be the consciousness of Buddhahood. Buddha’s all-embracing consciousness needs no moving from place to place, for it permeates all things; Buddha’s transcendental consciousness requires no fluctuations, for it transcends all necessity for change; Buddha’s Consciousness of Totality needs neither alterations of form nor adjustments of function, because all the innumerable forms and capacities embodied in the infinite matrix of the Supreme Consciousness of Buddhahood are simultaneously arising in a perfect harmony of interpenetration.

To achieve this Supreme Consciousness, Buddhism believes that the first step is to quiet the ever flowing thoughts, bringing them to as complete a halt as possible, so that one may have the opportunity to elevate his awareness to a higher and steadier level until it is brought to its final consummation. Meditation is, therefore, the practice that is fundamental and indispensable

to the transformation of human consciousness into the enlightened Wisdom of Buddhahood. The theory and practice of Buddhist meditation and its related subjects are so vast and comprehensive that a lifetime may not be sufficient to exhaust them. The most, therefore, that can be done here is to sketch in brief outline a contour of the meditation practices as envisioned by Buddhist yogis within the framework of the Buddhist tradition. We shall begin our discussion by reviewing the three main facets of Buddhist meditation, namely, its general characteristics, its techniques, and the successive stages leading to *Samadhi*.

### 1. *The Four Basic Characteristics of Samadhi*

The English word "meditation" is not a good equivalent for the Sanskrit words *Dhyana* or *Samadhi*. In common English usage meditation means "to muse," "to plan," or "to think things over," which is not at all the meaning of *Dhyana* or *Samadhi*. Although *Dhyana* is derived from the root *dhi*, "to think" or "to contemplate," it does not mean to think things over in the ordinary sense. The Chinese translation of the term *Dhyana* is *chin lu*, meaning "contemplation in quietude"; the Tibetan is *bSam gTan*, meaning "the stabilized mind," which is perhaps a better rendering of the central idea of *Dhyana*. The Sanskrit word *Samadhi* means "putting things together," or "union of the meditator with the object meditated upon." In short, both *Dhyana* and *Samadhi* denote a state of perfect mental concentration. *Samadhi* is usually considered by "Hinduism" as the highest stage of yogic accomplishment—the state of *Mukti*, or the final liberation from *Sangsara*. Buddhism, however, considers *Samadhi* as merely a higher state of mental con-



centration, having little to do with liberation or *Nirvana*. This is witnessed by the fact that the names of hundreds of different *samadhis* are listed in the Mahayana *sutras*.

The following are some of the basic characteristics of *Samadhi*:

1. In *Samadhi* the yogi's mind is absorbed in perfect concentration on the object upon which he is meditating. It is a state of fusion, or unity, of the meditator and the object meditated upon.

2. In *Samadhi* the yogi always experiences an intensely blissful sensation, which is both physical and psychic. The intensity and profundity of this blissfulness is far greater than any bliss which the average human being has ever experienced. Allegedly it is many times greater than any rapture known in the sexual experience.

3. In *Samadhi* the yogi invariably experiences the presence of a great "illumination." This is not a vision of a luminous nature, but the clear and bright aspect of the awareness of his own consciousness, an experience almost impossible to describe. All one can say is that the very universe itself seems to vanish into one great whole of transparency and light.

4. In an advanced stage of *Samadhi* no thought arises in the yogi's mind, not even a thought of the object originally meditated upon. This is because every thought is a complete *process*, containing the stages of arising, subsisting, and dissipating; and this "perishable" process is the very thing that meditation aims to subjugate in order to bring the mind to a state of "no-thought." This "thoughtlessness" of *Samadhi* is not torpidity or insensibility; it is a stabilized, illuminated awareness, devoid of any thought-in-motion. In short, *human thought is awareness in motion, while Samadhi is awareness at rest*.

Points (2), (3), and (4), namely, blissfulness, illumination, and "thoughtlessness," are the three basic ex-

periences of *Samadhi*. If any one of these is lacking, the *Samadhi* is incomplete.

5. Another major characteristic of *Samadhi* is the stoppage of breath. Without a complete cessation of breathing, the progressive thought-flow will never cease its perpetual motion. A number of different names have been used to designate *Samadhi*, one of them being "stopping the breath" (Chinese: *chih shi*), which unmistakably points to the fact that *Samadhi* is a state related to this condition. The reason for this common and very natural phenomenon of *Samadhi* is clearly expounded by Tantrism in its theory of the "Principle of the Identicalness of Mind and *Prana*," according to which every individual thought is brought into play by a particular *Prana*-in-action. If the *Prana* is pacified or halted, so is the mind, and vice versa. More detailed explanations of this theory have been given in my "Yogic Commentary," pp. xli and xlii, in Evans-Wentz's *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*.<sup>2</sup>

The foregoing five experiences may be regarded as the five cardinal features of *Samadhi*.

## 2. The Seven Different Types of Meditation Practice

Comparative study of the manifold meditation techniques of the different religions, schools, and sects is a difficult and fascinating subject, beyond the scope of this book. But the major meditation practices of Mahayana Buddhism can be summarized in seven groups.

### PRACTICING MEDITATION THROUGH BREATHING EXERCISES

According to the basic theory of the Identicalness of Mind and *Prana*, if one can tame his breath, his mind



will also be tamed. The breathing exercise is, therefore, one of the best approaches to *Samadhi*.

The term "breathing exercise" alludes to the conditioning of one's breath through certain repeated manipulations according to a pre-determined scheme. The commonest methods are either counting the breath, or suppressing or holding it.

Of these two approaches the first is perhaps the easiest and safest. It has been highly recommended by many Buddhist teachers, and widely practiced by most Buddhist meditators for centuries. Unlike the others, this type of meditation may be practiced without absolute reliance on the constant guidance of the *Guru* if one has a good knowledge of breathing techniques and understands the basic principle of *Dhyana* practice. The great Master, Chih I, the founder of the Tien Tai School of China, explained the "counting and following" breathing exercises very clearly in his celebrated book *Lu Miao Fa Men*, or *The Six Wondrous Entrances*<sup>20</sup> [*to Enlightenment*]. These so-called Six Wondrous Entrances are interpreted in ten different ways from the viewpoints of ten respective fields of study, thus making a total of sixty items or angles of approach to the principle of the "Six Wondrous Entrances."

When this principle is applied to the field of breathing, six successive steps or stages are formed.

The first step, called "The Stage of Counting the Breath," is to focus one's mind on the count of each inhalation *or* exhalation—never both at the same time. Count from one to ten very slowly and calmly. If the counting is interrupted by a single distracting thought, the yogi should go back and recommence his counting at "one." Through repeated practice he will gradually become well-versed in this counting exercise, all distracting thoughts will be eliminated, and the process of counting from one to ten will be completed without in-

terruption. The breathing will then become very subtle, light, and tamed. Now the need for counting the breath diminishes—counting has even become a burden to the yogi. This experience is called “Realizing the Counting of Breath.” When the yogi has reached this point, he stops the counting exercise and proceeds to the second step, known as “Following the Breath.”

Here the yogi’s mind merges itself with his breathing, following it in and out with ease and in perfect continuity. He will now feel that the air he takes in spreads throughout his entire body, even reaching to the tip of every hair; and his mind will become very calm and serene. This experience is called “Realizing the Following of Breath.” When the yogi reaches this point, “Following the Breath” also becomes a burden, and he should then abandon it as he did the counting and proceed to the third step, known as the “Stopping Practice.”

In this stage the yogi should completely ignore the breath and “stop” his mind on the tip of the nose. He will now feel extremely tranquil and steady, and soon both his body and mind will seem to have vanished into nothingness. This is the stage of *Dhyana*—a stage of perfect cessation. When it has been reached, the yogi should remind himself that, although the experience of *Dhyana* is wonderful, one should not, as Buddha has admonished, cling to it or linger in it.

After this the yogi should take the fourth step, called “The Observation Practice,” by observing his extremely subtle breath and all the contents of his physical body—the bones, flesh, blood, muscles, excrement, etc.<sup>3</sup> This will bring him to the realization that all of them are transient, momentary, and delusive—having no self-nature whatsoever. By repeatedly applying this scanning or “Observation Practice,” the “eye” of the yogi’s mind will gradually open, he will be able to see clearly all the minute functions of his organs and viscera, and will



realize that both physical and psychic existence are within the bounds of misery, transiency, and delusion—subject to the illusory idea of ego. When this point is reached the yogi should then enter the fifth stage, or the “Returning Practice,” to bring his mind back to its *original state*.

In this “Returning Practice,” the yogi must observe carefully the very nature of all the meditation practices which he has so far employed. He will then see that all of them are bound within a pattern of *dualism*, for there is always a mind that practices and an object or scheme that is practiced upon. To relinquish this face-to-face dichotomy and bring the mind back to its primordial state—the one absolute Void-Whole—is the central theme of the “Returning Practice.” This primordial state is to be entered into by contemplating the nonexistent or void nature of the mind. If one realizes that his mind is void by nature, from whence could the dichotomous “subject and object” possibly come? When the yogi arrives at the realization of this truth, the great Transcendental Wisdom will suddenly blossom as he dwells naturally and spontaneously in the primordial state.

Nevertheless, the yogi should still go one step further to work on the sixth and last stage, the “Purity Practice,” in order to cleanse the subtle “defilement-of-doing,” and to perfect and complete the transcendental Wisdom that has blossomed within him.

“Observation,” “Returning,” and “Purity” practices are actually not *Dhyana* but *Prajna* practices: the Observation Practice is to observe the voidness of sentient being; the Returning Practice, to observe the voidness of the “concrete” dharmas; and the Purity Practice is to observe the voidness of dichotomy and to merge one’s mind with the all-embracing Equality. It is only through practice of Voidness that any form of Buddhist meditation is brought to completion. The foregoing six stages

of meditation practice comprise the six successive steps highly recommended by the Tien Tai School of Chinese Buddhism.

Practicing meditation through "suppressing or holding the breath" is perhaps the most powerful and direct approach. It is capable of producing prompt yogic results, and thus quickly bringing the yogi to the state of *Samadhi*. However, it may be very dangerous and harmful if not properly applied. It is, therefore, not advisable to attempt this technique without proper guidance from a teacher, together with a sound foundation of easier breathing practices of the "softer" type (such as counting the breath, etc.).

In these breath-holding exercises the *Prana* in the earlier stages should be held below the navel, and in the advanced stages, in different centers of the body for different purposes and uses.<sup>4</sup>

### PRACTICING MEDITATION BY CONCENTRATING ONE'S MIND ON A POINT

This is an apparently simple, yet actually difficult, way of meditating. Many *Gurus* recommend that the yogi should first have mastered the breathing exercises to a certain extent before he engages in this "concentrating-on-one-point" meditation; otherwise, he will find it very difficult and boring. To concentrate on a point outside the physical body, viz., to focus the attention on any object in front of one is safer than, but not as effective as, concentrating the mind on a particular spot *within* the body. Focusing the attention on any part within the body will produce extraordinary and sometimes astonishing results. A specific psychical experience will always be brought forth by concentrating on a specific body center. For instance, concentrating on the point



between the eyebrows will produce the experience of "light," and concentrating on the navel-center that of blissfulness. When the concentration is on the heart-center, the positive and negative forces of the body will soon become united and will thus, in time, produce the "illuminating-void" or "blissful-void" experience. Buddhist Tantrics assert that each of the five main centers (*chakras*) of the body has its special functions and preferential applications. Only an accomplished *Guru* can explain them with authoritative intimacy. Detailed information concerning this topic may be found in the literature of Tibetan Tantrism.

### PRACTICING MEDITATION THROUGH VISUALIZATION

A person who has not studied or been trained in the practice of mind-control can hardly realize the difficulty of taming his own mind. He takes it for granted that he can order it to think anything he wishes, or direct it to function in any manner he wills. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Only those who have practiced meditation can understand the difficulty encountered in controlling this ungovernable and ever fluctuating mind. For instance, if we close our eyes and try to visualize a picture, we will soon discover how difficult this is. The picture is usually hazy and unsteady; it fades, fluctuates, and refuses to stand still or to "come whole." To untrained people this so-called visualization is, at most, a *feeling* rather than a "seeing." Once I meditated for one hundred days in a hermitage on a remote mountain in Central China, practicing the visualization of an image of Buddha sitting upon my head. Every day I worked from eight to nine hours at nothing but this one visualization. In the first few weeks the picture was very hazy, indistinct, and unsteady. When I visualized the head of

the Buddha I lost all traces of his arms and torso; when I saw the arms and torso, I forgot the head and legs. Only once in a great while could I momentarily visualize the whole of Buddha's image clearly without its wavering or fading out. Finally, after about seven weeks of continuous practice, the visualization gradually became so vivid and clear that it appeared even more distinct than the image itself seen with the naked eye. Some people may find this hard to believe, but it is a fact to which yogis who have practiced and experienced this type of meditation testify.

Buddhism declared centuries ago that human beings do not see things with their eyes, but with their minds. The organs of the eye are stimulated by the differing degrees of light reflected by various objects around us. This stimulation, in turn, is interpreted by the mind and resolved into visual pictures—resulting in what we call sight. Since whatever we “see with the eye” is necessarily a processed product, no matter how closely or how accurately it has been reproduced, it cannot be a perfect replica of the original. This processed “vision-of-the-eye,” compared to the vision projected directly from and seen by the mind, can hardly be considered “high-fidelity.” If this theory is valid, the claims of the yogis are neither exaggerated nor the product of pure imagination.

Returning to our original topic, visualization is one of the best exercises for mastery of mind and *Prana*. Tantrism especially emphasizes its usefulness, and applies it in almost every form of meditation except Mahamudra. Hundreds of different visualization practices are provided for different individual needs and for special applications. Visualizing a static object or a picture outside of the body is generally considered as a preliminary and preparatory exercise; visualizing a moving object circulating in a definite orbit within the body is



regarded as a more advanced practice. The attempted visualization of a highly complicated picture with all its details is excellent for beginners who are learning to harness their errant minds; and visualizing a simpler picture or object is advisable for higher meditations. Certain specific effects may be achieved by the different colors, forms, shapes, positions, and orbits of movement of the objects visualized. In the more advanced types of visualization the yogi has to construct visually a large picture in a very small space. Many Tibetan yogis can visualize clearly a vast *Mandala*<sup>5</sup> within the space of a tiny bean! Visualization, therefore, on the one hand can unfold the great potential power and flexibility of the mind, and on the other can bring the yogi to the advanced stage of *Samadhi*.

Although in its beginning stages visualization is mainly an exercise for the training of the Sixth Consciousness (mind) and is therefore confined largely within a dualistic and "clinging-bound" pattern, its advanced stage may well be very close to the realm of the nondualistic higher consciousness. It is the most comprehensive and complex of all meditation practices.

#### PRACTICING MEDITATION THROUGH MANTRAM YOGA—THE RECITING OR INTONING OF INCANTATIONS OR MYSTIC WORDS

While "visualization" is a meditation practice employing the mind's eye, Mantram Yoga employs the mind's ear. Sound, as well as sight, can be utilized as a means of bringing one to the state of *Samadhi*. To recite a prayer or Mantram, or to intone a single word of blessing, such as "Om," or "Ah," is a major meditation practice widely followed in the Orient. Although Buddhism does not stress the importance of sound to the

extent that Hinduism does, still "sound Yoga" has always been one of the mainstays of Buddhist meditation, and is extensively practiced by Buddhist monks and laymen. There are three reasons for its popularity: it is the easiest and safest type of meditation, it is a highly devotional one and it fulfills the religious needs of the masses. The previously mentioned types of meditation—breathing, concentration, and visualization—are mainly psycho-physical exercises, having little of the "religious" element in them. By themselves they cannot satisfy the spiritual longings of the people. To meet such needs the meditation practice of reciting a prayer, a Mantram, or a name of Buddha was established. It is the most popular and influential of all the different types of meditation, and is widely used by Buddhist devotees at all levels.

### PRACTICING MEDITATION THROUGH MOVEMENT

*Samadhi* is a state of mind that can be attained by a number of methods of which, on the whole, the most direct is the "still" type. But this is by no means the only way of reaching it. Certain special movements can also lead to *Samadhi*. For instance, the famous Chinese Taoist Movement of *Tai-chi* (Primordiality), invented by the great Taoist yogi, San Fung Chang of the Ming Dynasty, is an excellent way of practicing meditation. This Primordial Movement is a very gentle exercise ingeniously devised to bring the negative and positive forces in the body into perfect harmony, thus automatically taming the mind, controlling the *Prana*, and even bringing one directly to the state of *Samadhi*. This Primordial Movement has now become one of the most popular gymnastic exercises, widely practiced by Chinese people in all walks of life. Despite the marvelous hygienic value of this exercise, its present application is



considered by many Taoist yogis to be a degeneration of the Movement, which was originally devised for a much higher purpose.

There is another unique meditation practice devised by the Taoists, called "One-Word Instruction" (Chinese: *I tzu chueh*) by which a yogi may raise the *Kundalini* (life force) in a few days by certain special movements of his two thumbs. The exact manner of these movements is kept highly secret.

Generally speaking, Buddhism does not emphasize the application of movement for meditation purposes, although it does not rule out its usefulness, and even applies it on certain occasions. As a whole, however, Buddhism holds that "movement" is a good subsidiary exercise, but that it should not be treated as a primary form of meditation practice.

These movement practices are taught in various ways by different religions. Before beginning them, however, it is well to analyze and evaluate them carefully so as to avoid wasting time, and to safeguard oneself from any unwanted effects that inexperienced use of these mystic exercises might produce.

#### PRACTICING MEDITATION BY ABSORBING ONE'S MIND IN GOOD WILL, OR DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

From the spiritual point of view this meditation is much more important than any of the other five types we have just discussed. There is a teaching, widely practiced by Buddhist yogis, known as "The Four Unlimited Thoughts," which is used to cultivate devotional thinking and good will toward all beings. These Four Unlimited Thoughts are: friendliness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and evenmindedness. The aim of meditating upon these virtues is twofold—to cultivate compassion toward all beings, and to reduce those barriers between oneself

and others that have contributed so much to the misfortunes of the world. This meditation is regarded by Buddhists as the foundation of and preparation for all other meditations. In Tibet the stanzas of these "Four Unlimited Thoughts" are recited and contemplated upon before any meditation practice takes place. Without the spiritual preparedness that is brought about by the cultivation of good will and devotion, any type of meditation can hardly bear wholesome fruit, and instead may often lead one astray. Yogis who were unable to gain Enlightenment after a prolonged period of meditation often found that their preparatory work in the devotional and spiritual field was insufficient. Then they would turn back to practice the groundwork such as the "Four Unlimited Thoughts," the "Bodhisattva's Vow," prayers, prostrations, etc., to remove their deficiency in this field. The devotional type of meditation is, therefore, the foundation of all others; and it should never be neglected by those who are serious in striving for Enlightenment.

### PRACTICING MEDITATION BY IDENTIFYING THE MIND ESSENCE

This is the "effortless" meditation of Zen and Mahamudra. It is a meditation without any *thing* to meditate upon, the spontaneous and wondrous work of one's own mind, the pinnacle and essence of all Buddhist teachings. To those who have not entered into the "gate" this is the most difficult, but to those who have already entered this is the easiest of all meditations. All other exercises and practices are merely preparations for it. The critical point of this work is to recognize the nature of one's own mind, or at least to glimpse it. Once the Essence of Mind is recognized, the yogi will be able to absorb himself in it at any time or place without difficulty. In activity or in quietness the illuminating-void consciousness



will always shine brightly within him. Although after the recognition, or beholding, of the Mind Essence there is still a very long way to go, the first "glimpse" is regarded by all Buddhist sages as the most important thing, that which every yogi must first try to obtain. Once the "gateless-gate" is entered, meditation will no more be a "practice" or an effort. It now becomes a natural and spontaneous act of life. Sitting, walking, talking, or sleeping—all activities and conditions of life become marvelous meditations in themselves. No effort need be made, and no object or idea need be worked upon.

But in order to reach this gateless gate, one must work hard on the practice of this "nothing-to-practice" meditation, following either the path of Zen or that of Mahamudra. The former has been discussed in the previous chapter on "The Practice of Zen"; and for a discussion of the latter the reader may refer to Evans-Wentz's *Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation* and his *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, Book II.

### *3. The Three Successive Stages of Meditation*

#### THE FIRST STAGE

The first thing that the meditator experiences is his ever-arising, distracting thoughts. He discovers that his mind is so ungovernable that he can hardly control it even for a very short period of time. Errant thoughts flow on and on like a waterfall, without halting for a single moment. The tyro feels that he has many more distracting thoughts than ever before—meditation seems to have increased, rather than lessened, them. Many beginners are seriously baffled and disheartened by this initial experience. In their frustration they begin to doubt the effectiveness of their meditation practice, and become

skeptical about the very possibility of attaining *Samadhi*. Some then change their meditation techniques from one type to another, and end up in utter despair, finally giving up their practice altogether. The truth is that distracting thoughts are *never increased* by meditation; meditation only makes one *more aware* of them. Only a quiet mind can become aware of this thought-flux, which up to now has always been flowing on practically unnoticed. Therefore, this meditation experience is a sign of progress, not of regression. It is said that if the meditator has really gained some progress in his meditation, he may experience *many* thoughts which come and go *within a fraction of a second*. This fact has been testified to by Buddha himself, in the *Sutra of the Elucidation of the Hidden Profundity*.<sup>6</sup>

The *Alaya* [*Adana*] Consciousness is very subtle and profound;

In it all the *Seeds* flow on like pouring torrents.

I do not introduce this Consciousness to fools and ignoramuses,

For I am afraid that they might cling to it as the True Self.

According to the philosophy of Yogacara, the ever-arising thought-flux experienced in meditation is the *bringing-into-play* (Chinese: *hsien hsing*) of the "Impression-Seeds" that have so far been unnoticed in the Store (*Alaya*) Consciousness. These "Seeds," infinite in number, unlimited in range, and well-preserved in the depository of the *Alaya* consciousness, are the essential material constituting the basic framework of the human mind. The entire realm of *Sangsara* is upheld by this *Alaya* Consciousness and is set in motion by these "Seeds."

The work of meditation is, first, to recognize the action of the "Seeds" which manifests itself as thought-flux; second, to halt the propulsive workings of the Seeds; and finally, to transform or sublimate them into



the infinite capacity of Buddhahood. Therefore, one should not be discouraged by the discovery of this ungovernable thought-flow, but continue his meditation practice until he reaches the state of *Samadhi*.

## THE SECOND STAGE

If the yogi disregards the initial difficulty of controlling his errant thoughts and meditates perseveringly, he will gradually become conscious of a lessening of the thought-flow, and find it much easier to control than before. In the beginning, wild thoughts gush forth like torrents; but now the flow begins to move slowly like gentle ripples on a wide, calm river. When the yogi has reached this stage, he will probably encounter many unusual experiences; he will see strange visions, hear celestial sounds, smell fragrant odors, and so forth. Most of these visions, according to Tantric analysis, are produced by the *Pranas* stimulating the different nerve centers. Many of them are of a delusory nature. The yogi is repeatedly warned by his *Guru* that he should never pay any attention to them; otherwise he will be misled and go astray. The story told below is a typical example of the delusory visions that one is subject to in this second stage of meditation.

On the outskirts of the Par Pong Lamasary in the Derge district of Eastern Tibet, there was a small ashram called the "Meditators' House," where dwelt thirty-six Lama yogis who had vowed to meditate for three years, three months, and three days without stepping outside of the ashram boundary, or sleeping lying down on a bed, or seeing or talking to anyone except their *Guru* and their fellow meditators at certain limited times. An absolute silence was maintained in the ashram at all other times, and strict discipline was observed.

At the end of the three years, three months, and three days' period of meditation, a great "graduation"

celebration was held, in which all the monks in the monastery and the people in the village took part. Then, after the necessary preparations, the next class began. This program had been carried on for over two hundred years in the Lamasary of Par Pong.

In 1937 I studied there for some time, and had an opportunity to talk with a Lama who was one of the "graduates" of the Meditators' House. He told me the following story.

"In the middle of the fifth month of my stay in the House, one day, during my meditation, a spider appeared at a distance of a few feet from my nose. I did not pay any attention to it at the time.

"A few days passed, during which the spider did not vanish, but came closer and closer to my face. Annoyed by its constant presence, I tried in many ways to get rid of it. First, I meditated on Compassion—sending all my good will to the spider; but it would not go away. Then I called for help from the *Protector-of-Dharma*, and recited his fierce Mantrum in the hope of exorcizing the spider, but that was not effective either. Then I tried to meditate on the illusoriness of all beings, and to understand that this spider was not real, but merely a figment of my own imagination. Even this was of no use.

"A few more weeks then passed, in which, despite all my efforts to drive it away, the spider grew larger and larger, and moved closer and closer to my nose. Eventually it became so large and so close, and frightened me to such an extent, that I could no longer meditate. I then reported the whole experience to my *Guru*.

"He said to me smilingly, 'Well, it seems that you have tried everything that can possibly be done. I don't think there is anything I can do for you in this case. What would you do next?'

"This so upset me that I said, 'If nothing can help, I have no choice but to kill the spider with a dagger, for



as things now stand I cannot meditate nor can the spider derive any benefit from me. Although killing any sentient being is a crime forbidden by our Lord Buddha, the important thing now is that I cannot carry on my pursuit of Enlightenment due to this hindrance. I thus fail both myself and the spider. On the other hand, if I kill the spider, my hindrance will be overcome. Then once more I will have a chance to win Enlightenment, which will certainly bring true happiness to all concerned.'

"My *Guru* answered, 'Do not be in a hurry! Do not kill the spider today. Wait until tomorrow. Now listen carefully, and do what I say. Go back to your room and meditate again. When the spider appears, mark a cross on its belly with a piece of chalk. Then come back here and see me once more.'

"I followed his instructions and, upon the appearance of the spider, marked the cross on its belly as he had bidden me. Then I returned to his room and said, 'Dear Lama, I have done as you told me.'

"My *Guru* replied, 'Now, let down your apron!' I was very puzzled, but obeyed him. Thereupon he pointed to the lower part of my belly, and said, 'Look for yourself!' I lowered my head and looked. There, to my astonishment, I saw a cross marked in chalk! If I had stabbed the supposed spider, I would have killed myself!"

### THE THIRD STAGE

Thus, if the yogi pays no attention to distracting thoughts, physical discomforts, delusory visions, or other forms of impediment, but persists in his meditation, he will eventually achieve the longed-for accomplishment, and reach the state of *Samadhi*. From there he may take up the more advanced practice of *Prajnaparamita* and set his feet on the journey toward Buddhahood.

# Notes

## Chapter I. THE NATURE OF ZEN

1. Koan, the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese *kung-en*. This term has many meanings. Here it signifies "story" or "event." In the majority of cases where this term appears in Chapter I, it is used in this sense only; in Chapter II, "The Practice of Zen," it is used largely in a specific sense, denoting the *Hua Tou* exercise. See Chapter II, p. 72, "The Discourses of Master Hsu Yun," and Chapter III, Footnote 6.

2. Enlightenment. This word is used in this book solely to indicate the transcendental experience of realizing universal Reality. It signifies a spiritual, mystical, and intuitive realization, and should not be understood as a term denoting an intellectual awakening as its common application in association with "The Age of Reason" suggests.

3. Although the dragon and the phoenix are both considered to be auspicious animals by the Chinese, this expression can be used in either a complimentary or a sarcastic sense. While this was ostensibly a compliment, Tien Jan was speaking sarcastically.



4. Eight Worldly Winds is a term widely used by Buddhists to denote the eight worldly influences or interests that fan the passions and thus drive one on forever as a slave in Sangsara. They are: gain, loss; defamation, eulogy; praise, ridicule; sorrow, joy.

5. No-birth (Chinese: *wu sheng*; Tibetan: *skyed wa med ba*). This term is a literal translation of the Sanskrit *ajata*, but this literal rendering is somewhat misleading for those who do not realize that it denotes the nonexistent aspect of being. A better translation is "nonarising," or "nonexisting"—for anything that is "existent" must first be born.

6. The Chinese phrase *hua yen* means "flower-ornament" or "beautiful garland," denoting the title of an important Mahayana scripture called the *Hua Yen Chin* or the *Garland Sutra* (Sanskrit: *Avatamsaka Sutra*). Because the system and tenets of this philosophy are based upon the *Hua Yen* or *Garland Sutra*, it has been called "The philosophy of Hua Yen." This philosophy was established by the founder of the Hua Yen School, Master Tu Hsun of the Tang Dynasty, and has been generally considered as one of the greatest achievements of Chinese Buddhist scholarship. At present, neither a translation of the original text of the *Garland Sutra* nor of its exegeses and commentaries is available in European languages. The personal opinion of the author is that unless the texts of this *Sutra* are studied, one can hardly understand the spirit and philosophy of Mahayana Buddhism at its highest level and in its profoundest sense. The *Hua Yen Sutra* is, indeed, as the Chinese Buddhist proverb has said, "the King of all *sutras*." It is our high hope that this supreme *sutra*, together with its commentaries, will soon be translated into the English language. At present the reader may refer to D. T. Suzuki's excellent book, *The Essence of Buddhism*, wherein some basic tenets of the Hua Yen philosophy are introduced. Briefly speaking, Hua Yen philosophy is the philosophy of *totality*, the elucidation of the unfathomable Realm of Buddhahood and the brave spirit and profound understanding of the Bodhisattvas—those persons who

strive for Enlightenment in order to save sentient beings.

7. The Eight Consciousnesses. According to the Yogacara philosophy (Buddhist Idealism), the consciousness possessed by each sentient being has eight different functional aspects which are conveniently designated as the "Eight Consciousnesses." Of these, the first five are the Consciousness of the Eye, of the Ear, of the Nose, of the Tongue, and of the Body. The sixth is called "The Consciousness of Discrimination," the seventh, "The Consciousness of Constant Thought" or "Ego," and the eighth, the *Alaya* or "Store Consciousness." See Chapter II, p. 72, "The Discourse of Master Hsu Yun."

8. Shen Hsiu's stanza to the Fifth Patriarch was:

This body is the *Bodhi* Tree,  
This mind is like the mirror bright;  
Take heed to keep it always clean  
And let no dust collect upon it.

A complete account of this event may be read in Goddard's *Buddhist Bible*, pp. 498-502.

9. *Ta chi ta yung*. This Zen phrase is very difficult to translate. *Ta* means "great," and *chi* means "the critical point, time, or event." *Chi* can also mean "cleverness," "adroitness," or "opportunity," when combined with other words such as *chi chiao* or *chi hui*. *Ta chi* thus means "great opportunity," "great cleverness," "flexibility," or "crisis," implying that the Zen Master knows how to instruct his disciples under different circumstances with great skill and flexibility. When *ta yung*, meaning "great power and capability," is combined with *ta chi*, the phrase becomes more expressive and forceful.

10. The Ten Successive Steps of Zen Practice as suggested by Zen Master Yuan Chin are considered to be of great significance, but some of them are very enigmatic, especially points 3 and 6. Detailed commentaries on the text are not available at this time. The following brief explanations or interpretations of points 3, 5, and 6 may be helpful, however:

a. Point 3: When one reaches the state of *Satori*, he ex-



periences all, and all is embraced by and identical with, the Great Tao. Both sentient and insentient beings are alive in this "Great Whole." Thus even insentient beings are capable of preaching the Dharma.

b. Point 5: The distinguishing "Eye of Dharma" means the capability of making correct discriminations and evaluations of all teachings and all things.

c. Point 6: The meaning of this point is very obscure. The translator presumes that the "Path of the Birds" and the "Road of Beyond," or "Road of Wonder," suggest that advanced yogis should live in solitude for a time in order to mature their Zen realization.

11. *Trikaya*. The three bodies of Buddha. They are: the *Dharmakaya*, the *Sambhogakaya*, and the *Nirmanakaya*. The *Dharmakaya* is the self-nature of Buddha, while the *Sambhogakaya* and *Nirmanakaya* are manifestations of Buddha. The *Dharmakaya* is the void and abstract aspect, and the *Sambhogakaya* and *Nirmanakaya* are the active dynamic aspects.

12. The original text of this sentence as found in the *Ch'an Yuan Meng Chiao*, and in the *Chih Yueh Lu*, is very obscure in its meaning: hence different interpretations may be given to it. The translator's opinion is that "the subject matter of the One Form" (Chinese: *I se Pien Shih*), referred to by the Chief Monk, implied his understanding of "a length of white silk" as being the illumination experience that one attains in the advanced stage of *Dhyana*. This "understanding" was disapproved and discredited by the challenging monk, Chiu Feng. D. T. Suzuki, in his *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (p. 115), renders this story in quite a different manner. In the last paragraph of the story, as rendered by Suzuki (p. 115, lines 21 to 27), there appears to be some distortion of the original text. For instance, in line 23, "As to getting into a trance [*tso t'o li wong*] you have shown a splendid example," is definitely a mistranslation. The Chinese phrase *tso t'o* means to "liberate [oneself in] the sitting posture," and *li wong* means to "die while standing up." The whole phrase implies the capability of passing away at will in a sitting or standing

posture. Though *li wong* may also be interpreted as "die right away," because the Chinese word *li* could also imply *li k'o* meaning "at once," it should not be so interpreted in this case. Furthermore, *tso t'o li wong* is a technical Zen phrase widely used by all Buddhists. It has never meant "getting into a trance," as Suzuki suggests. (The original Chinese text of this story is given on p. 243, under "Chinese Characters for the Notes," Chapter I, Footnote 12.)

## Chapter II. THE PRACTICE OF ZEN

1. Mahamudra is the *Prajnaparamita* applied in its simplest and most practical form. This teaching is considered to be the highest teaching of Tibetan Buddhism. As a whole, Mahamudra may be thought of as the "Zen Buddhism of Tibet," although its style and idioms may not be identical with those of Zen. Mahamudra is a teaching through which one may realize his own mind in its natural and pristine form. See Evans-Wentz's *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*, and Book II of his *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*.

2. Serene-reflection meditation (Chinese: *mo chao ch'an*) may also be rendered as "silent-observation meditation," or "meditation of tranquil-contemplation."

3. *Wu*. This word, as used here, is pronounced according to the "second tone," and is a completely different word from the other "*Wu*" (*Satori*). The latter is pronounced according to the "fourth tone." The former "*wu*" means "nothingness," and the latter, "Enlightenment."

4. Seven Days' Meditation. In order to avoid distractions and interruptions so that they may seriously practice meditation under more favorable conditions, Buddhist devotees sometimes go into retreat for a period, or successive periods, of seven days in a quiet place—alone, or with their fellow brothers in the Dharma.

5. Not every day of the two periods of the "Seven Days' Meditation" has been given here, for the reason that (1) the Master does not preach every day, and (2) only those discourses which are pertinent have been included.



6. "Chang" and "Lee" are two of the most common surnames in China.

7. The original sentence, if literally translated, would read, "The Mind, Intellect, and Consciousness (Chinese: *Chin*, *I*, *Shih*; Sanskrit: *Citta*, *Mana*, *Vijnana*) are hindrances on the Path more obstructive than poisonous snakes and wild beasts. . . ." Here Master Tsung Kao used the Yogacara terminology in a very loose and free manner which is, strictly speaking, incorrect and misleading. What he meant was that the "conceptualization," but not the mind itself, is blameworthy. A free translation in this case is, therefore, more desirable.

8. This refers to the seats made of straw and the bamboo chairs specially designed for meditation purposes.

9. *I chin* (pronounced "ee-chin"). This is a very important Zen term meaning "doubt-sensation" or the feeling of doubt.

The whole system of koan exercises is based upon the generation, and then the breakthrough, of this "doubt-sensation." "Doubt," as used here, is not doubt in the ordinary sense of the word; it is, rather, a special type of doubt—a doubt without content—or, more succinctly, the pure sensation of "doubt" per se. Sometimes the Zen Buddhists also use the term "doubt-mass" (Chinese: *I t'uan*) to denote that this sensation is like a great mass or load weighing upon one's mind. Though *I chin* in its original usage denotes the sensation of doubt brought about by the koan exercise, Master Po Shan seemed to have used it in his discourse in a much wider sense, not only denoting the preliminary sensation of doubt originally suggested by the term, but also including almost all the advanced Zen experiences brought forth by the koan exercises.

10. "To revive after death" is a Zen phrase denoting the advanced stage of Enlightenment. One who has reached this stage not only realizes the void aspect (allegorically, death), but also the dynamic aspect (allegorically, life) of being—seeing them as a whole. This realization of the dynamic vitality of all things is what Zen calls "The Great Revival" (Chinese: *Ta Huo*).

11. The Chinese term *yung huo*, the state of "flexible-hollowness," is extremely difficult to translate adequately. *Yung* means "merging," "melting," "harmonious"; and *huo* means "empty," "hollow," "spacious," etc. When *yung* and *huo* are combined, the term is used in a special sense denoting an "all-free" sensation that Zen practitioners experience. Although "flexible hollowness" is not a very satisfactory translation for *yung huo*, it is the best the translator can find.

12. "The state of wonder" (Chinese: *hua chin*) is another untranslatable phrase widely used by Taoists and Zenists. *Hua* means "transformation," "changing," "melting," "vanishing," and "wonder"; *chin* means "realm," "state," "experience," etc. *Hua chin* is thus a state of melting-down of all obstructions, a state of liberation and wonder.

13. *Tsen Ch'an* (Japanese: *Zan-Zen*) is to "bore into the work of Zen." *Tsen* is a verb, meaning to "bore," "pierce," or "penetrate into." *Tsen Ch'an* thus implies that in practicing Zen one should try to penetrate into the very depths of his mind. The exertion of "penetrating into" is what the *tsen* word stresses.

14. A Zen expression denoting freedom and liberation.

15. *Huo chu* is a very strange Zen term, literally meaning a "live sentence" or "live remark," but its connotation is just the reverse of what the literal meaning apparently suggests. These "live remarks" are the utterly unintelligible, inexplicable, absurd, and dead-end type of sayings which Zen uses so frequently, while the "dead remarks" (Chinese: *ssu chu*) are the intelligible ones. The book of the *Notes in the Forest* (Chinese: *Ling Chien Lu*) quotes Zen Master Tung Shan as saying, "Those remarks within which one may find another remark [intelligible] are called 'dead remarks,' and those within which no other remarks or meanings can be found [unintelligible] are called 'live remarks.'" (See *The Great Buddhist Dictionary* [in Chinese], by Ting Fu Pao, p. 1666.)

16. Chinese Zen Buddhists divide Buddhism into two distinct groups. One is designated as "The Principle"



(*Tsung*), and the other as "The Doctrine" (*Chiao*). The former is the teaching of Zen, and the latter is the teaching of all other Buddhist schools, including all the sects of Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism.

17. As prophesied by Buddha himself, Buddhism has been declining with the degeneration of morality in mankind. According to Buddha's prophecy, the progressive decline and degeneration of Buddhism will continue until it disappears from the earth. Then the Buddha Maitreya will descend to this world, and Buddhism will again prevail, this time over the entire earth. The Buddhism of the next period—that of the Buddha Maitreya—will not be subject to the decline-pattern that the Buddhism of this present period—that of the Buddha Sakyamuni—is now undergoing.

18. The Three Kindoms. According to Buddhist cosmology, there are three realms or "universes" wherein dwell three different grades of sentient beings. The highest domain is called "The Domain of Non-form." Sentient beings of this domain have no bodily form, existing only in the expression of different states of consciousness. The second domain is called "The Domain of Form." Sentient beings of this domain have bodily form, but no desires or lusts. The third domain is called "The Domain of Desires." Sentient beings of this domain have many different kinds of desires and fears. Animals, human beings, beings in Hell, and those in certain regions of Heaven all belong to this "Domain of Desire." Sentient beings of the two upper Domains, namely, the "Domain of Form" and the "Domain of Non-form," are those who have gained various stages of *Samadhi*. Their states of consciousness vary greatly, from the consciousness state of the First *Dhyana* to that of the Eighth *Dhyana*. Having absorbed themselves in the great Ecstasy and Illumination, these sentient beings consider themselves to have reached *Nirvana*. But the truth is that they are only indulging themselves in an ecstatic state of "resemblance to *Nirvana*." Orthodox Buddhists deem these states to be of little value or significance.

19. The year 1545. The original text reads: "The 25th year of Chia Chin of the Emperor Shih Tsung of Ming

[Dynasty]," which is equivalent to A.D. 1545. For the convenience of the reader, the original Chinese dates given in this autobiography have been converted into those of the Christian chronology.

20. In the old days, attaining a high position in the government was the major, if not the only, ambition of Chinese intellectuals. Study was mainly for this purpose.

21. Champion Scholar (Chinese: *Chuang Yuan*). In imperial days the royal government of China held a national examination every three or four years to select the "most learned" men in China. The champion of this final national examination, known as the *Chuang Yuan*, would receive the highest honors the nation could bestow. Opportunities for governmental positions were also offered to him. To become the Champion Scholar of the nation was, therefore, the chief ambition of intellectuals in those days.

22. "The Master of Men and Heaven" was a title of respect conferred upon certain highly advanced monks. According to Buddhist tradition, only those monks capable of being Masters or Teachers of all men and heavenly beings merited this title.

23. Preliminary official examinations were held by the district or provincial governments in order to select their candidates for the final national examination. Anyone who passed the district or provincial examinations would also be honored by the government, and good opportunities for governmental posts were also offered to him. (See Footnote 21, above.)

24. The Ten Mysterious Gates (Chinese: *shih hsuan men*) are the ten basic principles of Hua Yen, by means of which the Hua Yen philosophy of totality is expounded.

25. The meaning of this sentence is not very clear. "Subduing the Ox" probably implies accomplishing the successive stages of Zen work, as illustrated in the "Ox-Herding" pictures. See Reps's *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*, the "10 Bulls" by Kakuan, transcribed by Nyogen Senzaki and Paul Reps, pp. 165-187.

26. *Ch'an ping* ("Zen-sickness," or "The sickness that has arisen through Zen practice") refers to the hindrances



and mishaps that one may encounter in the practice of Zen.

27. "The Miraculous Understanding of Avalokitesvara" (Chinese: *Kwan Yin Yuan Tung*). "Kwan Yin" is the Chinese translation of "Avalokitesvara," but there is no clear-cut definition or meaning of the phrase *yuan tung*. It is difficult, therefore, to translate this phrase very accurately. *Yuan* means "round," "complete," or "perfect"; and *tung* means "thorough understanding," or "thorough awakening." "The Miraculous Understanding of Avalokitesvara" is, therefore, a free and tentative translation.

28. "Mutual Turning-into" is a frequently used term in Hua Yen philosophy. (See Suzuki's *The Essence of Buddhism*.)

29. *Vajra*-seat, or "The Diamond Seat."

30. Maitreya is the coming Buddha.

31. According to an old Chinese legend, under the jaw of a black dragon there lies a most precious pearl. Hence the term *li-lung* (black dragon) symbolizes the most precious thing to be found in the world.

32. *Wu*. The "Wu" word, as used here, is pronounced according to the "second tone." (See Footnote 3, above.)

33. Travel-for-study visits. In order to find the *Guru* who may help one most, visiting different teachers and studying under them are necessary for all Zen students. Zen Buddhists, therefore, established a tradition and system called "Travel-for-study" (Chinese: *tsen fang*) to facilitate and further the Zen student's progress. After basic training in the monastery, the monk is encouraged to begin his travel-for-study period.

34. See Footnote 9, above.

35. Most Chinese monasteries have three major courts separated by three walls and gates.

36. Ocean-seal *Samadhi* (Chinese: *Hai yin san mei*) is the *Samadhi* of Buddhahood. Since the ocean is the destination of all rivers and is also a great mirror that is capable of reflecting all manifestations in the world, it is figuratively used to describe the all-reflecting Wisdom of Buddhahood now expressed in the term *Samadhi*. This expression is frequently used by Zen and Hua Yen scholars.

37. Chao Chou was a remarkable Zen Master. He was regarded as one of the most acute and profound Zen teachers, and looked upon both as a symbol and as an example to be emulated by all Zen Buddhists.

38. The six organs are the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. "The organ of mind" is a very controversial subject in Buddhist philosophy. Many scholars of the Yogacara School believe that the Seventh, or Ego, Consciousness, is the organ of mind.

39. Fa Yan (?-1104) was known as the "Fifth Patriarch" by the Lin Chi School, and should not be confused with the original Fifth Patriarch, Hung Jeng, the teacher of Hui Neng.

### Chapter III. THE FOUR PROBLEMS OF ZEN BUDDHISM

1. This is a well-known saying of Mahamudra, widely used in Tibet. The Tibetan is:

*Snan wa ma byin shen pa byin*  
*Shen pa khyod kyi Naropa*

2. "*Pu-shuo-po*" ("not to speak too plainly") was rightly translated by Hu Shih in his article, "Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism in China," *Philosophy East and West*, III (No. 1, April, 1953), 3-24, though his understanding and interpretation of Ch'an were purely from the historian's viewpoint and so are not always philosophically sound. Suzuki gave an elaborate explanation of "*pu-shuo-po*," which covered almost three pages in his article, "A Reply to Hu Shih," *Philosophy East and West*, III (No. 1, April, 1953, 25-46). Here I am afraid Suzuki missed the point. He stressed only the inexpressible or inscrutable aspect of Zen Truth.

3. There are three different schools of thought in Buddhism concerning the relationship between the *klesas* (passions or desires) and *Bodhi*, *Sangsara*, and *Nirvana*. Theravada stresses the necessity of destroying the passions in order to attain *Nirvana*. General Mahayana advocates the transformation of the passions into *Bodhi*. The third view emphasizes the identity of the sentient being and the Bud-



dha, of the passions and *Bodhi*, and of *Sangsara* and *Nirvana*, since from the ultimate viewpoint there is no difference between the pure and the impure. This last view is held by both Zen and Tantra.

4. *Wu*, pronounced in the "fourth tone." This word differs from the other "Wu". See Footnote 3, Chapter II, above.

5. This is a well-known Zen proverb and is used widely by Zen students in China.

6. *Hua Tou* ("the essence of the sentence"). Suzuki uses "koan exercise" instead of "*Hua Tou* exercise" in most of his writings. See Suzuki, *Zen Buddhism*, p. 139. Although both "koan" and "*Hua Tou*" may be used to denote the "inquiry exercise of Zen," the latter is original and more accurate. "Koan" implies the entire Zen story, including all the events, plus the main question at issue, and therefore it is a general term, while "*Hua Tou*" is very specific. "*Hua Tou*" denotes only the question, not the whole story; and in most cases only the "gist," "highlight," or "essence," so to speak, of the question is implied.

7. This story is selected from Chu Hung (1535-1616), *Exhortation on the Advance Through Ch'an Gates* (*Ch'an kuan tse chin*).

8. "Dharma" is a term widely used in Buddhism. While it has many meanings, the two most commonly used are (a) the Buddhist doctrine, or the teaching of Buddha, and (b) being, existence, subject, principle, etc. Dharma is here used in the latter sense.

9. Hsuan Chuang (596-664), *Chen Wei Shih Lun* (*Vijnapti-matratasiddhi-Sastra*), Chapter 7.

10. The Eight Consciousnesses are: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind, ego, and storehouse consciousnesses.

11. According to Sthiramati, there are only three portions in each consciousness. In contrast to Dharmapala's theory of four portions, Sthiramati's is much clearer and simpler. The four-portion theory as propounded by Dharmapala seems to be redundant and it has been criticized by a number of Yogacara scholars in recent years. Some explanation of the four portions is given by Junjiro Taka-

kusu, *The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1947), p. 88. The reader is also referred to p. 89, where the three object-realms which are in close relation with the four-ports theory are explained. However, Takakusu's explanation of the object-realm of mere shadow is too concise and thus misleading: ". . . 2. The object-domain of mere shadow or illusion. The shadow-image appears simply from one's own imagination and has no real existence. Of course, it has no original substance as a ghost which does not exist at all. Only the sixth, sense-center, functions on it and imagines it to be." This passage gives the impression that the Sixth Consciousness—the most active and versatile among the Eight Consciousnesses—which people generally call "mind," is a faculty which senses solely the delusive images. This is not true. The *Pa Shih Kuei Chu Sung*, by Hsuan Chuang, explains the Sixth Consciousness in relation to the three object-realms in the following sentence: "It includes the three natures, three measurements and also three object domains." This sentence describes the Sixth Consciousness as embracing all the three natures—good, bad, and neutral; the three measurements—direct, indirect, and erroneous; and the three object realms of nature, of mere shadow, and of the original substance. Thus we know that the Sixth Consciousness functions not merely on the delusive images which characteristically belong to the erroneous measurement but also functions on the object-realm of nature which belongs to the direct measurement, and in some cases on the object of the original substance.

12. For this sentence, see Hu Shih, "Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism in China," *Philosophy East and West*, III (No. 1, April, 1953), 3–24. Hu Shih translated it as "The one word 'knowledge' is the gateway to all mysteries."

13. Suzuki, "A Reply to Hu Shih," *Philosophy East and West*, III (No. 1, April, 1953), 31–32.

14. *Discourses of the Six Patriarchs*, p. 18.

15. *Te-shan goto egen*, Book VII: *Dianikon Zokuzokyo*, p. 116.

16. The Eight Negations are: no arising, no extinction,



no eternity, no cessation, no oneness, no manifoldness, no coming, no going.

17. *Transmission of the Lamp*, Book V: *Taisho Daizokyo*, No. 2076; Vol. LI, p. 240.

18. *Chin* is a Chinese unit of weight equal to about 1½ pounds avoirdupois.

19. See the koan of "Drawing the Bow After the Thief Had Left," *National Translation of the Collective Works in Zen Studies*, XVI, 13.

20. See the koan of "The Cold Fountain and the Ancient Stream," *National Translation of the Collective Works in Zen Studies*, XVI, 13.

21. See the *Prajnaparamita-hrdaya Sutra*.

22. *Szu liao chien* is expediently translated here as the "Four Distinctions." It may also be rendered as "Four Distinctions and Selections."

23. See the "Discourse of Zen Master Lin-chi Hui-chao of Chen-chou," in *National Translations of the Collected Works in Zen Studies*, V, p. 5.

24. *Ibid.*

25. See pp. 145, 146.

26. See "Discourse of Master Lin-chi," p. 3.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

30. See *Transmission of the Lamp*, Book I, p. 4.

31. See "Discourse of Master Lin-chi," p. 26.

32. See *The Five Ranks of Lord and Vassal*, p. 11.

#### Chapter IV. BUDDHA AND MEDITATION

1. *Dharmadhatu* is a term widely used by Hua Yen scholars denoting the infinite universes that penetrate and embrace one another in the absolute realm of Totality. See D. T. Suzuki's *The Essence of Buddhism*, Lecture II.

2. The quotation referred to is as follows:

"Although it is not necessary to expound here all the many aspects of the doctrine, one of the more important of them should receive some attention, namely, 'the recip-

rocal character of mind and *Prana*,' which means that a certain type of mind or mental activity is invariably accompanied by a *Prana* of corresponding character, whether transcendental or mundane. For instance, a particular mood, feeling, or thought is always accompanied, manifested, or reflected by a *Prana* or breathing of corresponding character and rhythm. Thus anger produces not merely an inflamed thought-feeling, but also a harsh and accentuated 'roughness' of breathing. On the other hand, when there is calm concentration on an intellectual problem, the thought and the breathing exhibit a like calmness. When the concentration is in a state of profound thinking, as during an effort to solve a subtle problem, unconsciously the breath is held. When one is in a mood of danger, pride, envy, shame, arrogance, love, lust, and so on, simultaneously there arises the 'air,' or *Prana*, of anger, pride, envy, shame, arrogance, love, lust, and so on; and this 'air' can be felt immediately within oneself. In deep *Samadhi* no thought arises; so there is no perceptible breathing. At the initial moment of enlightenment, which is also the moment of the total transformation of normal consciousness, the *Prana*, too, undergoes a revolutionary transformation. Accordingly, every mood, thought, and feeling, whether simple, subtle, or complex, is accompanied by a corresponding or reciprocal *Prana*.

"In the higher states of meditation, the circulation of the blood is slowed down almost to cessation, perceptible breathing ceases, and the yogi experiences some degree of illumination, or 'brightness,' together with the thoughtfree state of mind. Then not only does a change of consciousness occur, but also a change in the physiological functioning of the body. In the body of a fully enlightened being, the breathing, the pulse, the circulatory and nerve systems are quite different from those of ordinary men. Much evidence in support of this fact is available from Hindu, Tibetan, and Chinese sources."

3. See the author's "Yogic Commentary" in Evans-Wentz's *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* (2nd edition), pp. xli and xlii.



4. For further details, consult Evans-Wentz's *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* (2nd edition), pp. 187–210, the author's forthcoming *Esoteric Teachings from the Tibetan Tantra*, and other books referring to the subject.

5. *Mandala* means "circle." In its general sense this term is used by Tantrism to denote any individual unit, either *Sangsaric* or *Nirvanic*, in the universe. In its specific sense it implies the "city" or "residence" of a specific deity. This "City of Buddha" is usually depicted with a chief Buddha in the center and a number of escorting deities placed in a circle around him. The over-all picture of a Tantric *Mandala* is strikingly similar to that of the structure of an atom or solar system. The *Mandala* is considered by Tantric scholars as a symbol of the Universe, in either its macrocosmic or its microcosmic sense.

6. *Elucidation of the Hidden Profundity Sutra* (Chinese: *Chieh sheng mi chin*; Sanskrit: *Sandhi-nirmocana-Sutra*).

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### 景德傳燈錄

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### 禪宗龜鑑

Wu Men. *Wu Men Kuan* (the gateless gate).

### 無門關



# Appendix: Romanized Chinese Characters for the Text

a. tang hsia i nien

a. 當下一念

b. "pa feng ch'ui pu tung, i pi ta kuo Chiang."

b. "八風吹不動，一屁打過江"

c. chi feng wen ta

c. 機鋒問答

d. ssu shui

d. 死水

e. "ch'ao chou pa shih yu hsing chio."

e. "趙州八十猶行腳"

f. Yuan chin shih men: "i hsu hsing yu chiao wai pieh  
ch'uan hsu chih yu chiao wai pieh chuan san hsu  
hui yu ch'ing shuo

f. 元靜十門: "一須信有教外別傳, 二  
須知有教外別傳, 三須會有情說

fa yu wu ch'ing shuo, fa wu erh, ssu hsu chien hsing  
ju kuan

法與無情說法無二, 四須見性如觀

chang shang liao liao fen pieh, i i t'ien ti yin mi. Wu,  
hsu chu

掌上了了分別, 一一田地隱密, 五須具

che fa yen, lu hsu hsing niao tao hsuan lu, chi hsu wen  
wu

擇法眼, 六須行鳥道玄路, 七須文武

chien chi, pa hsu ts'ui hsieh hsien cheng, chiu hsu ta  
chi ta yung,

兼濟, 八須摧邪顯正, 九須大機大用, 十

shih hsu hsiang i lei chung hsing."

須向異類中行."



g. ju shih mi shou

g. 入室密授

h. ts'en hua t'ou

h. 參話頭

i. wu

i. 無

j. Yun men wei, "kuang pu t'ou t'o yu liang pan pin, i ch'ieh

j. 雲門謂光不透。脫有兩般病。一切

ch-u pu ming, mien ch'ien yu wu shih, yu t'ou te i ch'ieh fa

處不明。面前有物是。又透得一切法

k'ung yin yin ti shih yu ko wu hsiang ssu i shih kuang pu t'ou

空。隱之地。似有個物相似。亦是光不透 t'o."

脫。

k. chieh wu, cheng wu.

k. 解悟, 證悟

l. "wu shih shih lai sheng ssu pen, ch'in jen huan cho pen lai jen."

"無始時來生死本, 痴人喚作本來人."

m. tun wu chien hsiu

m. 頓悟漸修

n. liao chih

n. 了知

o. cheng chih

o. 證知

p. pi liang ching chieh

p. 比量境界

q. hsien liang ching chieh

q. 現量境界

r. i ch'ieh wu ai

r. 一切無礙

s. i ch'ieh yung she

s. 一切容攝

t. san kuan

t. 三關

u. wu wei chun chen

u. 五位君臣

v. ssu liao chien

v. 四料簡

w. t'ou t'o

w. 透脫

x. lu miao fa men

x. 六妙法門



# Romanized Chinese Characters for the Notes

## CHAPTER I

3. "lung sheng lung tzu, feng sheng feng erh."

3. "就生就子，鳳生鳳兒"

9. ta chi ta yung

4. 大機大用

2. Jui chou, chiu feng, tao chien sh'an shih wei shih  
shuang shih

14. "瑞州九峯道虔禪師，為石霜侍

che, mi shuang kuei chi. chung chin shou tso chi chu  
ch'ih

者。泊霜歸寂。眾請首座繼住持。

shih pai chung yueh, "hsu ming te hsien shih i shih  
k'o." tso

師白眾曰。須明得先師意始可。座

yueh, "hsien shih yu shih mo i." shih yueh, "hsien shih  
tao,

曰。先師有什麼意。師曰先師道

hsiu chu. hsieh chu, leng ch'iu ch'iu ti ch'u, i nien wan  
nien

休去歇去。冷湫湫地去。一念萬年

ch'u, han hui k'u mu ch'u, ku miao hsiang lu ch'u, i  
tiao pai

去。寒灰枯木去。古廟香爐去。一條白

lien chu. ch'i yu tse pu wen, ju ho shih i tiao pai lien  
chu.

練去。其餘則不問。如何是一條白練去。

tso yueh, "che ko chih shih ming i se pien shih." shih  
yueh,

座曰。這個只是明一色邊事。師曰。

"yuan lai wei hui hsien shih i chai." tso yueh, "ni pu  
k'en wo

原來未會先師意在。座曰。你不肯我



na? tan chuang hsiang lai, hsiang yen tuan ch'u jo  
ch'u pu te

那. 但裝香來, 香煙斷處. 差法不得

chi pu hui hsien shih i." sui fen hsiang, hsiang yen  
wei tuan,

即不會先師意. 遂焚香. 香煙未斷

tso i t'o chu. Shih fu tso pei yuen, "tso t'o li wang chi  
pu wu

座已脫去. 師撫座背曰. 坐脫立亡. 即不無

hsien shih i wei meng chien tsai."

先師意未夢見在

## CHAPTER II

2. mo chao ch'an

2. 默照禪

4. ta ch'i

4. 打七

9. i ch'in

9. 疑情

11. yung huo

11. 融豁

12. hua chin

12. 化境

13. ts'an ch'an [tsen ch'an]

13. 參禪

15. huo chu

15. 活句

24. shih hsuan men

24. 十玄門

27. kuan yin yuan t'ung

27. 觀音圓通

32. wu<sup>2</sup>, wu<sup>4</sup>

32. 無. 悟

33. ts'an fang hsin chueh

33. 參訪行腳

36. hai yin san mei

36. 海印三昧

### CHAPTER III

2. pu shuo p'o

2. 不說破

7. ch'an kuan ts'e chin

7. 禪關策進



# Index

- Abrupt enlightenment and gradual practice, 117  
 "Advance on Meditation" (Hsueh Yen), 164  
*Alaya* (Storehouse Consciousness), 115, 169, 216, 222n;  
 See also Eight Consciousnesses  
*Anatman* (non-ego), 171  
*Avatamsaka* (*Hua Yen*) Sutra, (Hua Yen Chin scripture), 125, 138, 221n  
*Awakening of Faith, The*, 140  
 Awareness, 95  
  
 Baso, see Ma Tsu  
 Bean cake maker, song of, 84  
 Behavioral tests, 35-36  
*Biographies of the Great Monks, The*, 123  
*Bksh-rgyud-pa* (Kagyutpa) school, 160  
 Bkar-gyud school, 172  
 Black dragon (*li lung*), 229n  
*Bodhi* (*Chueh*), 102, 153, 162, 163, 230n  
*Bodhidharma*, 12, 14, 18-19, 63, 64, 66, 71, 159  
*Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha*, 199  
*Bodhisattva Manjusre*, 136  
*Bodhisattva Vatou*, 125  
*Bodhisattva's Vow*, 214  
 Breathing exercises, 204-208  
*bSam gTan* (stabilized mind), 202  
 Buddah: on the Dharma, 113;  
 Indra's appearance before, 109; meaning of term, 185-186; Perfections, 186-200; prophecy of, 227n; *Tachueh*, 163; three bodies of, 223n  
 Buddha Amida, reciting name of, 76, 123, 124, 125  
 Buddha Maitreya, 227n  
 Buddha Sakyamuni, 227n  
 Buddhahood (*Atman*), 36, 54, 159; meditation and, 9, 185-219, 233-235n; and human thinking patterns, 185-200  
*Buddhist Bible* (Goddard), 222n  
  
*Chakas* (centers of the body), 209  
 "Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism in China" (Ho Shih), 230, 232  
*Ch'an Chi* (Meditation Assembly), 125-126  
*Ch'an kuan tse chin* (Exhortation on the Advance, Through Ch'an Gates), 231n  
*Ch'an Yuan Meng Chiao*, 223n  
 Chang (surname), 225n  
 Chang Chen-chi, 204, 235n  
 Chang Chin, 51  
 Chang Lu, 142  
 Chang Wu Yuen, 90  
 Ch'an's (Dhyanas), see *Samadhi*  
 Chao Chou, Master, 17, 21, 24, 26, 32-33, 36, 40, 49, 51, 71, 72, 98, 99-100, 151, 174, 230n  
 Chen Chi Jen, 94  
*Chen Wei Shih Lun* (Hsuan Chuang), 168  
*Cheng wu* (realization-Wu), 116, 117-118  
*Cheng-chueh* (*Sambodhi*), 162  
*Chi feng*, defined, 35  
*Chi feng wen ta* (crucial-verbal-contest), 35-39

- Chiao (The Doctrine), 227n  
*Chieh wu* (understanding-Wu), 116  
*Chien*, 51–54  
*Chih* (self-awareness), 168–169  
*Chih I*, Master, 205  
*Chi shi* (stopping the breath), 204  
*Chih Yueh Lu*, 223n  
*Chin*, 116, 232n  
*Chin* of Huai Shang, 142, 143  
*Chin lu* (contemplation in quietude), 202  
*Chin Shan* (Golden Mountain) Monastery, 75, 81–82  
*Chin so yu chih* ("The Wisdom of Knowing All"), 187  
*Chin Tsu* Monastery, 146, 154  
*Ching Liang*, Master, 124, 134–135  
*Chiu Feng*, 14, 59–60, 223n  
*Chu Chou*, 145  
*Chuang Tzu*, 187  
*Chuang Yuan* (champion scholars), 121, 228n  
*Chueh* (*Bodhi*), 102, 153, 162, 163, 230n  
*Chung Lao Tze*, 143  
 Circle-running exercise, 75, 77  
 "Cold Fountain and the Ancient Stream, The" (koan), 233  
 Conceptualization: danger of, 86–87, 96; Zen objections to, 158–159  
 Concentrating on-one-point meditation (*i nien*), 112–113, 208–209  
 "Confucian scholar" (proverb), 188  
 Congregation-for-Dharma, 137–138  
 Consciousness, Pure, 43  
 Consciousnesses, *see* Eight Consciousnesses  
 Contemplation in quietude (*chin lu*), 202  
*Daie Sökō*, *see* Tsung Kao, Master  
 Dead remarks (*ssu chu*), 226n  
*Dharma*, 20, 32, 93, 96, 102, 113, 144, 146, 155, 165, 231n  
*Dharmadhatu*, 159, 193, 233n  
*Dharmakaya*, 58, 87, 223n  
*Dharmapala*, four-portion theory of, 231–232n  
*Dhyanas* (*Ch'an*s), 11, 75, 96, 166, 227n; *See also* *Samadhi*  
 "Diamond Seat, The," 135, 229  
*Diamond Sutra*, 22, 69, 70  
 Diamond Vehicle (*Vajrayana*), 172  
 "Doctrine, The" (*Chiao*), 227n  
 "Domain of Desires, The," 227n  
 "Domain of Form, The," 227n  
 "Domain of Non-Form, The," 227n  
 Doubt-mass (*I-t'uan*), 225n  
 Doubt-sensation (*I chin*), 94–95, 96, 97, 99, 101–111, 150–151, 154, 225n  
 "Drawing the Bow After the Thief Had Left" (koan), 233n  
 Ego (Seventh) Consciousness, 83, 84, 230n  
 Eight Consciousnesses, 83–84, 117, 168, 222n  
 Eight Negations, 173, 232–233n  
 Eight Worldly Winds, 32, 221n  
*Elucidation of the Hidden Profundity Sutra*, 235n  
 Enlightenment, 8, 11, 15, 60, 63, 75, 90, 94, 156, 170, 220n  
 Enō, *see* Hui Neng  
*Esoteric Teachings from the Tibetan Tantra* (Chang Chen-chi), 235n



- Essence of Buddhism, The* (Suzuki), 221n, 229n, 233n  
*Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy, The* (Takakusa), 231-232n  
 Essence of the sentence, 164, 231n  
 Evans-Wentz, W. Y., 204, 215, 224n, 234n  
 Examinations, national, 228n  
 Expression, styles of, 13-14;  
     Explicit-Affirmative koans, 17-21; groups of, 17; Im-  
     penetrable-type koans, 17, 23-26; Implicit-Negative  
     koans, 21-23  
*Fa Hua Sutra*, 126  
 Fa Kuang, Master, 128-129, 132  
 Fa Yan, 46, 154, 230n  
 Fa Yen sect, 63  
 Ferry Monk's koan, 98  
 Fifth Patriarch, *see* Hung Jeng  
 Five Positions of the King and  
     the Minister, 163  
 "Five Ranks of the Lord and  
     Vassal, The" (Wu Wei Chun  
     Ch'eng), 183  
 Five *Skandhas*, 100  
 Flexible hollowness (*yung*  
     *huo*), 97-98, 226n  
 Fo Ying, 31-32  
 "Following the Breath," 206  
 Four Distinctions of Lin Chi,  
     163, 175-184  
 "Four Unlimited Thoughts,  
     The," 213-214  
 Fu Ta Shih, 16  
*Garland Sutra* (Hua Yen  
     Chin), 221n  
 Gautama Sakyamuni, *see*  
     Buddha  
 Gensha, *see* Hsuan Sha  
 Goddard, Dwight, 222n  
 Golden Mountain (Chin Shan)  
     Monastery, 75, 81-82  
 Good will, meditation through,  
     213-214  
 Goso Hōen, *see* Fa Yan  
*Great Buddhist Dictionary,  
     The* (Ting Fu Pao), 226n  
 Great Ear Tripitaka (monk),  
     47-48  
*Great Perfect Wisdom Sutra*,  
     75  
 "Great Revival, The" (*Ta*  
     *Huo*), 225n  
 Gunin, *see* Hung Jen  
*Hai yin san mei* (Ocean-seal  
     *Samadhi*), 149, 229n  
 Han Shan, Master, 8, 111-142  
*Heart Sutras*, 70  
 High Heaven (Kao Ming)  
     Monastery, 75, 78  
 Hinayana Buddhism, 226-  
     227n  
 Horizontal Wisdom, 186-187  
 Hsi Lin, Master, 122  
*Hsiang*, 42-44  
 Hsiang, Lin, 14  
 Hsiang, Yen, 143, 159  
 Hsieh Kuo Jan, 93  
*Hsien hsing* (bringing-into-  
     play), 216  
*Hsin tsung* (Mind Doctrine),  
     *see* Zen Buddhism  
*Hsing*, 51-54  
 Hsing Ssu, 63  
 Hsiu, Brother, 146-147  
 Hsiung Hsu Ya, 93  
 Hsu Shou Yuan, 90-91  
 Hsu Tun Li, 86-87, 89-90  
 Hsu Yun, Master, 8, 70; Dis-  
     courses of, 72-85, 222n  
 Hsuan Chuang, 168, 232n  
 Hsuan Sha, 100-101  
 Hsueh Feng, 174  
 Hsueh Yen, Master, 152, 154,  
     155, 164-165, 166; "Ad-  
     vance on Meditation," 164;  
     autobiography of, 144-148  
 Hsuen Lang, 131  
 Hu Nan Province, 54-56

- Hua chin*, 226*n*  
 Hua Yen philosophy, 41, 123–124, 134, 138, 193, 221*n*, 229*n*; on ultimate truth, 158–159  
 Huai Shi, 142  
 Huang Po, Master, 18, 26, 27–29, 58–59, 66–67, 83, 174, 182–183  
 Huang Po Cheng, 86, 89  
 Huang Tsao, 56  
 Hui Chung, Master, 25–26, 47–48, 51  
 Hui Ming, 20  
 Hui Neng, 15, 20–21, 23, 37–38, 63, 66–67, 75–76, 169, 174, 230*n*  
 Human thought, patterns of, 189–196  
 Hung Chih, 68  
 Hung Chou, 27  
 Hung Jeng, 230*n*  
*Huo chu*, 110, 226*n*  
 Hyakujō, *see* Pai Chang  
  
*I chin* (doubt-sensation), 94–95, 96, 97, 99, 101–111, 150–151, 154, 225*n*  
*I nien* (concentrating on-one-point), 112–113, 208–209  
*I se Pien Shih* ("One Form"), 59, 223*n*  
 I Shan, 21–22  
*I tzu chueh* (One-Word Instruction), 213  
 I Yang sect, 63  
 Incantations, intoning of, 211–212  
 Indra (god), 109  
*Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, An (Suzuki), 223*n*  
 Isan Reiyū, *see* I Shan  
 I-t'uan (doubt-mass), 225*n*  
  
*Jhana*, *see* Zen Buddhism  
 Jinne, *see* Shen Hui  
 Jinshū, *see* Shen Hsiu  
 Jōshū, *see* Chao Chou  
  
*Ju shih mi shou*, 65  
*Ju so yu chih* ("The Wisdom of Knowing the Thing as It Is"), 186–187  
  
 Kagyutpa (*Bkah-rgyud-pa*) school, 160  
 Kakuan, 173*n*  
 Kao Feng, Master, 80–81, 152–155  
 Kao Ming (High Heaven) Monastery, 75, 78  
*Klesas* (passions or desires), 230*n*  
 Koan (*kung-en*, *Hua Tou*), 17–26, 231*n*; attitude toward supernatural, 58–60; decoding, 13–14; Enlightenment and, 49–51; explicit-affirmative, 17; Ferry Monk's, 98; four distinctions of Lin Chi, 175; impenetrable type, 17; implicit-negative, 17; meaning of, 17, 70–71, 220*n*; practicing Zen through, 70–72; system of, 225*n*; *wu* and, 71, 72  
 Koan (*Hua Tou*) exercises, popularity of, 66  
 Konin, *see* Hung Jeng  
 Ku Chan of Chin Tien, Master, 151  
 K'uei Chi, 170  
*Kundalini* (life force), 213  
*Kung-an*, *see* Koan  
 Kuo Tze I, Prime Minister, 30–31  
 Kwan Yin (god), 118, 120, 123  
 Kwan Yin Yuan Tung (Miraculous Understanding of Avalokitesvara), 130, 229*n*  
 Kwung Chou Mountain, 144  
  
 Law of Causation (*Karma*), 29–30, 149  
 "Leaving no Trace" (Ferry Monk's koan), 98



- Lee (surname), 225n  
 Lee Hsien Chen, 85-86  
 Lee Wen Hoo, 90  
*Leng Yen (Surangama) Sutra*, 109, 131, 139  
*Li* (Principle, Truth), 107, 110  
*Li* (reality), 52  
*Life of Chung Feng*, 123  
 Life force (kundalini), 213  
*Li-lung* (black dragon), 229n  
*Li wong*, 223-224n  
*Lin Chi*, 22-23, 27-29, 56-57, 66-67, 161; Discourse of, 176-178; "Four Distinctions" of, 175-184  
*Lin Chi* (Rinzai) sect, 63, 65-67  
 Lin Yin Monastery, 145  
*Ling Chien Lu*, 226n  
 Live remark (*huo chu*), 110, 226n  
*Lotus Sutra*, 96, 140  
 Lu Han Mountain, 144  
 Lu Lung Li, 91  
*Lu Miao Fa Men (The Six Wondrous Entrances to Enlightenment)*, 205  
 Lu Shun Yuan, 87-88  
 Lung Tan, Master, 27  
 Lung Ya, 14  
  
 Ma Ku, 22-23, 181  
 Madhyamika School, Zen and, 171-175  
 Mahakasyapa, 74, 75, 149, 182  
 Mahamudra, 64, 160, 224n, 230n  
*Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra*, 70  
 Mahayana Buddhism, 12, 167-171, 188, 191, 193, 199-200, 226-227n  
 Maitreya Bodhisattva, 136, 229n  
*Mandala*, 211, 235n  
 Mantrams (holy incantations), 115-116; meditation through, 211-212  
 Master of Men and Heaven, The (title), 122, 228n  
 Master of Silence (fraudulent monk), 33-35  
*Maya*, 197  
 Meditation: basic characteristics of *Samadhi*, 202-204; breathing exercises, 204-208; Buddhahood and, 9, 185-219, 233-235n; concentrating mind on one point, 208-209; devotional thoughts, 213-214; distracting thoughts and, 216; First Stage, 215-217; Montram Yoga, 211-212; and patterns of human thought, 189-196; of Pure Land School, 108; Second Stage, 217-219; serene-reflection (*mo chao*), 67-70; Seven Different Types, 204-215; survey of the practice, 200-219; Three Successive Stages, 215-219; through movement, 212-213; through visualization, 209-211; Yogacara school, 170  
 Meditation Assembly (*Ch'an Chi*), 125-126  
 Meditation seats, 88, 225n  
 Meditators' House (Par Pong Lamasary), 217-218  
 Meng Shan, Master, 148, 154, 166  
 Miao Feng, 126-130, 134-135, 138, 139  
 Miao Kao Feng, 164  
 Middle Way, 172  
 Mind, aspects of, 41-48, 172-175  
 Mind Doctrine (*hsin tsung*), see Zen Buddhism  
 Mind, Essence of (*ti*), 44-48  
 Mind Essence, meditation through, 214-215  
 Mind-essence Practice, 172

- Mind-only (*Vijnaptimatra*) philosophy, 168  
 Mind, organ of, 230n  
 Mind—the Source of All Dharma (Tsu Yuan), 178  
 Minds and outer objects (*chin*), 116  
 Ming Che, 38–39  
 Miraculous powers, Enlightenment and, 59  
 Miraculous Understanding of Avalokitesvara (*Kwan Yin Yuan Tung*), 130, 229n  
 "Mirror of Long Yen, The" (Han Shan), 139  
*Mo chao ch'an* (serene-reflection), 67–70  
*Moksha* (Nirvana), 36  
 Mount Ching Liang, 54–56  
 Movement, meditation through, 212–213  
 Movement, Primordial (*tai-chi*), 212  
  
 Nan Chuan (Nansen), 17–18, 22, 49, 79; monastery of, 24  
 Nanyō Echū, *see* Hui Chung, Master  
 Naropa, 160  
 Nirmanakaya, 223n  
 Nirvana, 36, 43–44, 74, 88, 171, 203, 227n, 230n  
 No-birth, Essence of, 37, 38, 221n  
 No-birth, 221n  
 No-mind (*wu hsin*), 86  
 Non-abiding Middle Way Doctrine, 44  
 Non-ego, theory of (*anatman*), 171  
 "Non-form, The Domain of," 227n  
 "Not to speak too plainly" (*pu-shuo po*), 161, 230n  
 Nothing/Nothingness (*Wu*), 69, 72, 73, 142, 224n, 229n  
 No-thought, tranquility of (*wu nien*), 69  
  
 Not-Doing, teaching of (*Wu Wei*), 73  
  
 Obaku, *see* Huang Po, Master  
 Observation, defined, 76  
 Observation of mind in tranquility, 67–70  
 "Observation on the Mind-only Doctrine in Five Steps," 170  
 Observation Practice, 206–207  
 Ocean-seal Samadhi (*Hai yin san mei*), 149, 229n  
 "One Form" (*I se Pien Shih*), 59, 223n  
 One thought (*i nien*), concentration on, 112–113, 208–209  
 One-Word Instruction (*I tzu chueh*), 213  
 Ox, subduing the, 129, 228n  
 Oxherding Pictures, 163  
  
 Pai Chang, 19–20, 21–22, 29–30, 53  
 Pang Wen, 54, 58  
 Pao En, monastery of, 122  
 Pao Fang, Master, 98  
 Pao Kuang (Precious Light) Monastery, 75  
 Par Pong Lamasary, 217–218  
 Phoenix, the, 220n  
 Plain feeling, Zen and, 12–13  
 Po Shan, Master, 8, 51, 94–111, 225n  
 Practice (*hsing*), 51–54  
*Prajna*, 112, 153, 196; power of, 149  
*Prajna*, 168–169, 196  
*Prajna of Eight Thousand Verses*, 70  
*Prajnaparamita*, 194, 197, 219–224n; meditation of, 69; Zen and, 172–175  
*Prajnaparamita-hrdaya Sutra*, 175, 233n  
*Prajnaparamita Sutras*, 70  
*Prajna-Truth*, 15–41, 173, 179



- Prana*, 204, 234*n*  
 Precious Light (Pao Kuang) Monastery, 75  
 Primordial Movement, 212–213  
 Primordiality (*Tai-chi*), 212  
 Principle (*Li*), 107, 110  
 "Principle, The" (Tsung), 226–227*n*  
 "Principle of the Identicalness of Mind and *Prana*," 204–208  
 Principle of the Three, 163  
 Protector-of-Dharma, 218  
 Pseudo-Zen experiences, 73–79  
 Pu Hua, Master, 56–58  
 Pu Yuan, Master, 40  
 Pure Consciousness, 43  
 Pure Land School, 76, 108  
 Purity Practice (in breathing exercises), 207  
*Pu-shuo-po* (not to speak too plainly), 161, 230*n*  
  
 Rationalization, dangers of, 96–97  
 Reality, 51–54  
 Realization-Wu (*cheng wu*), 116, 117–118  
 Realizing the Count of Breath (in breathing exercises), 206  
 Red Nose, 166  
 "Resembling-Wu," 116  
 Returning Practice (in breathing exercises), 207  
 Rinzai, *see* Lin Chi  
 Rinzai (*Lin Chi*) sect, 63, 65–67  
 rNyin-ma school, 172  
  
*Samadhi*, 27, 47, 227*n*; basic characteristics of, 202–204; Seven Different types, 204–215; Three Successive Stages, 215–219; *See also* Dhyanas (ch'ans)  
  
*Sambhogakaya*, 223*n*  
*Sambodhi* (*Cheng-chueh*), 162  
*Samyaksambodhi* (*Cheng-teng-chueh*), 162  
 San Fung Chang, 212  
*Sangsara*, 44, 87–88, 92, 101, 102, 103, 111, 112, 117, 202, 230*n*  
*Satori* (Wu), 51–53, 111, 116, 222–223*n*  
 Scholar, Confucian, 188  
 Second Patriarch, 18–19  
 Seigen Gyōshi, *see* Hsing ssu  
 Sekisō, *see* Shih Shuang  
 Sekitō, *see* Shih Tou  
 Self-awareness, 42–44, 168–169  
*Sems ngo*, 172  
 Senzaki, Nyogen, 228*n*  
 Serene-reflection meditation, 67–70, 224*n*  
 Seven Days' Meditation, 73–85, 224*n*; and Enlightenment, 77  
 Seventh (ego) Consciousness, 83, 84, 230*n*  
 Seventh Patriarch, *see* Shen Hui, Master  
 Shan Hsi Province, 54–56  
 Shao Lun, 127  
 Shen Hsiu, 46, 222*n*  
 Shen Hui, Master, 75–76, 168  
 Shen Tsan, Master, 19–20  
*Shih* (matter), 52  
*Shih, sheng* (consciousness and senses), 117  
*Shih hsuan men* (Ten Mysterious Gates), 123–124, 228*n*  
 Shih Keng, 152  
 Shih Shuang, Master, 59  
 Shih Tan Monastery, 84  
 Shih Tou, 24–25, 63  
 Shih Tsung, Emperor, 227–228*n*  
 "Silver mountains and iron walls," koans as, 23–24  
 Six organs, 230  
*Six Wondrous Entrances to*

- Enlightenment, The (Lu Miao Fa Men)*, 205  
 Sixth Consciousness, 83, 84, 211, 232n  
 Sixth Patriarch, *see* Hui Neng  
*Skandhas*, 100  
*Skyed wa med ba* (no-birth), 221n  
 Sōtō (*Tsao Tung*) sect, 63, 65–67  
 Sound Yoga, *see* Mantrams  
 Spider, vision of, 218–219  
*Ssu chu* (dead remarks), 226n  
 Stabilized mind (bSam gTan), 202; *See also* *Dhyanas*  
 Stage of Counting the Breath (in breathing exercise), 205–206  
 State of wonder (*hua chin*), 226n  
 Sthiramati, theory of consciousness, 231n  
 Stopping the breath (*chin shi*), 204  
 Stopping Practice (in breathing exercises), 206–207  
 Store/Storehouse (*Alaya*) Consciousness, 115, 169, 216, 222n  
 Su Tsung, Emperor, 47–48  
 Su Tung Po, 31–32  
 "Subduing the Ox," 129, 228n  
 Sung Dynasty, 31–32, 66, 76, 78  
*Sunyata* (Voidness of the Mind), 44–48, 171–175, 194, 197  
 Supernatural elements, 54–60  
*Surangama (Leng Yen) Sutra*, 109, 131, 139  
*Sutra of the All-merciful One*, 120  
*Sutra of the Elucidation of the Hidden Profundity*, 216  
*Sutras*, recitation of, 115  
 Suzuki, D. T., 168, 221n, 223n, 229n, 230n, 231n, 232n, 233n  
*Szu liao chien* (Four Distinctions), 233n  
*Ta chi ta yung* (flexibility), 52, 222n  
*Ta Huo* (The Great Revival), 225n  
 Ta Hui, 129  
 Ta Mei, 79–80  
 Ta Shih Chih (god), 123  
 Ta Yu (Daigu), 28  
*Ta-chueh* (title), 163  
*Tai-chi* (Primordiality), 212  
 Takakusu, Junjiro, 231–232n  
 Tang, period of, 75  
 Tang Dynasty, 30–31, 47–48, 51, 221n  
*Tang hsia i nien* (instantaneous thought), 13  
 Tantrism, 172, 204, 209, 210, 235n  
 Tao, 13, 17–19, 49, 79, 97–98, 103, 109, 112, 146, 147, 159  
 Tao Tsung, 56  
 Te Shan, Master, 21, 27, 39, 170  
 Temple of Gratitude, 14  
 "10 Bulls" (Kakuan), 173n  
 Ten Mysterious Gates (*shih hsuan men*), 123–124, 228n  
 Ten Suggestions on Zen Practice (Yuan Chin), 69–70, 222n  
 Teng Yin Feng, 24–25, 40–41, 54–56  
 Theravada Buddhism, 230n  
 Thought patterns, human, 189–196  
 Thoughts, devotional, 213–214  
 Three Thousand Good Manners, 37  
 Three Vehicles and the Twelve Divisions, 179  
 Ti (Essence of the Mind), 44–48  
*Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*, 215, 224n



- Tibetan Tantrism, 172, 204, 209, 210, 235n  
*Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, 204, 215, 224n, 234n  
 Tieh Shan, autobiography of, 164-167  
 Tien Jan, 220n  
 Tien Tung, 104  
 Tilopa (Guru), 160  
 Ting Fu Pao, 226n  
 "To revive after death," 95-96, 225n  
 Tōsan, *see* Tung Shan, Master  
*Total Enlightenment Sutra*, *The* (Yuan Chiao Chin), 96  
 Tou Weng, Master, 142  
*Tou-to*, prajna-truth and, 173  
*Transmission of the Lamp, The*, 98  
 Travel-for-study (*tseu fang*), 145, 229n  
 "Treasure guard, the," 104  
*Trikaya*, 54, 223n  
 Truth (*Li*), 107, 110  
 Tsao Tung (Sōtō) sect, 63-70  
*Tseu* (boring into), 66, 99, 101, 102  
*Tseu Ch'an* (Zan-zen), defined, 226n  
*Tseu fang* (Travel-for-study), 145, 229n  
*Tseu Zen* (Zen work), 145  
 Tseng Tien Yu, 88, 92-93  
 Tsu Yuan, 176, 178  
 Tsung ("The Principle"), 226-227n  
 Tsung Kao, Master, 8, 65, 66, 225n; Discourses of, 85-94  
 Tu Hsun, Master, 221n  
 Tuan Chiao, Master, 154  
 Tui Keng, 152  
 Tung Shan, Master, 14, 21, 38-39, 71, 183, 226n  
 Turning-into, mutual, 229n  
 Twelve Divisions, 179  
 Ultimate truth, 158-159  
 Ummon, *see* Yun Men  
 Understanding-Wu (*chieh wu*), 116  
 Unintelligibility, problem of, 157-162  
*Vajira-seat*, 135, 229n  
*Vajrayana* (Diamond Vehicle), 172  
 Vertical Wisdom, 186-187  
*Vijnaptimatra* (Mind-only) philosophy, 168  
*Vimalakirti Sutra*, 37-38  
 Visions, delusory, 217-219  
 Voidness of the Mind (*Sunyata*), 44-48, 171-175, 194, 197  
 Wan Shan, 148, 152  
 Wen Kung, 90  
*Wen ta*, 35-39  
 Wen Yuan, 33  
 Wisdom, perfect, 186-196  
 Wisdom of Buddhahood, 229n  
 "Wisdom of Knowing the Thing as It Is, The" (*Ju so yu chih*), 186-187  
 Words, mystic, intoning of, 211-212  
 Wrongdoings, confession of, 115-116  
*Wu* (nothing/nothingness), 69, 72, 73, 142, 224n, 229n  
*Wu* (*Satori*) experience, 52, 71, 98-99, 111, 116-117, 129, 143-145, 148, 154, 162-165, 229n, 231n  
 Wu Chi, Master, 122, 123, 124, 126  
 Wu Chun, 148  
 Wu Feng, 21-22  
*Wu hsin* (No-mind), 86  
*Wu insight*, *see* Enlightenment  
 Wu Men, 18  
*Wu nien* (tranquility of No-thought), 69  
*Wu sheng* (no-birth), 221n

Wu Tai Mountain, 129, 140, 141  
*Wu Wei* (teaching of Not-Doing), 73  
*Wu Wei Chun Ch'eng* (The Five Ranks of Lord and Vassal), 183  
 Wu Wen, Master, autobiography of, 142-144  
 Wu Yuan Chi, 54-56  
 Yellow Dragon Monastery, 150  
 Yen, King of, 32-33  
 Yin Feng, *see* Teng Yin Feng  
 Yogacara School, 167-171, 216, 225*n*, 231-232*n*  
 "Yogic Commentary" (Chang Chen-chi), 204, 233-234*n*  
 Yogis (Zen), kinds of, 116  
 Yōka, *see* Yung Chia, Master  
 Yuan Chiao Chin (*The Total Enlightenment Sutra*), 96  
 Yuan Chin, Master, 52, 222*n*;  
 "Ten Suggestions on Zen Practice," 69-70, 222*n*  
 Yuan of Shuang Lin, Master, 145  
 Yun Feng, 142  
 Yun Ku, Master, 123, 125, 126  
 Yun Men, Master, 56, 100, 106  
 Yung (outerlayer of mind), 42  
 Yung Cheng, Emperor, 78-79  
 Yung Chia, Master, 37-38, 87, 113  
 Yung Huo (flexible hollow-ness), 97-98, 226*n*  
 Yung Mao Shihi, 91-92  
 Zan-Zen (*tsen ch'an*), defined, 226*n*

Zen (Ch'an) Buddhism: as an art, 26-41; aspects of mind, 41-49; behavioral tests, 35-36, 39-41; to bring disciple to Enlightenment, 26-29; core of, 41-49; difference between Mahayana Buddhism and, 12; as a direct experience, 7-8; discourses of four masters, 72-118; expressing *Prajna-Truth*, 26-41; four problems of, 156-184, 230-233*n*; general review and practice, 62-155; historical background of, 62-67; humor and wit, 26, 31-35; to illustrate teaching, 26, 29-31; koan exercise, 70-72; levels of approach, 15, 16-26; and *Madhyamika*, 171-175; Mahayana Buddhism and, 12, 157, 171-175; misconceptions about, 49; nature of, 11-61; number of Patriarchs, 64; and the *Prajnaparamita*, 172-175; serene-reflection, 67-70; spread of, 63-64, 75; style and expression, 11-41; system, order and category of koans, 157, 175-184; as a teaching, 11-14, 26, 29-31, 60-61; testing genuineness and understanding, 27, 35-39; ungraspability and, 14-41; unintelligibility and, 157-162; verbal contests, 35-39; vital points of, 49-61; way of life, 49-61; and Yogacara, 167-171  
*Zen Buddhism* (Suzuki), 231*n*  
 Zen-sickness (*Ch'an ping*), 129, 132, 228-229*n*  
 Zen work (*tsen Zen*), 145

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